

CONCEPT OF THE POLICY ON VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Expert guidelines for the development of the updated
state policy on veterans and their families

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Authors of the document:

Ivona Kostina, co-founder of Veteran Hub
Liubov Halan, co-founder of “Pryncyp”, Human Rights Center for the Military
Oksana Koliada, Chair of the Management Board of the Space of Opportunities NGO
Yuliia Morii, Director of the Legal Hundred NGO
Yaroslav Pavlovskiy, Member of the Board of the Space of Opportunities NGO
Kostiantyn Tatarkin, Technical Adviser of the IREX Veterans Reintegration Program
Alla Bieloshenko, lawyer of the Legal Hundred NGO
Iryna Dmytrenko, lawyer of the Legal Hundred NGO
Olha Termeno, lawyer of the Legal Hundred NGO

Authors who worked on policy's sections:

Oksana Sukhorukova, Ukrainian Health Center (UHC)
Olena Sinitsyna, Ukrainian Health Center (UHC)
Denys Sultanhaliiev, Pryncyp Human Rights Center for the Military
Anna Pashkina, Pryncyp Human Rights Center for the Military
Halyna Alomova, Communications Director at Veteran Hub

Authors who participated in discussions and consultations:

Masi Nayyem, co-founder of the Pryncyp Human Rights Center for the Military
Ivanna Stets,
Artem Denysov, Veteran Hub
Oksana Syvak, International Institute of Postgraduate Education, Psychological Counseling and Trauma Therapy Center
Liudmyla Aharkova, Psychological Counseling and Trauma Therapy Center
Hanna Demydenko, Women's Veteran Movement
Kateryna Pryimak, Women's Veteran Movement
Mariia Kvitka, KornFerry
Kseniia Voznitsyna, Lisova Poliana Veterans Mental Health National Center
Yana Voitovska, Senior Specialist in Monitoring, Evaluation and Training at IREX
Tetiana Shvydchenko, Candidate of Historical Sciences, Chair of the Expert Corps NGO

Designer: Viktoriia Denysova, Veteran Hub

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Information About Author-Organizations

Veteran Hub is a network of psychosocial support for veterans and their loved ones. The organization provides free legal counseling and psychological support services, including private consultations and support groups. The network has spaces in Kyiv and Vinnytsia, mobile offices for delivering services to veterans and their families at home in Kyiv, Vinnytsia and Dnipropetrovsk Oblasts, and a national phone support line (+38-067-348-28-68). In over five years, the organization has provided more than 35,000 services. Given the daily experience of interacting with veterans and their families, Veteran Hub conducts in-depth research and advocates for improving the well-being of veterans and their families.

Website veteranhub.com.ua Facebook fb.com/VeteranHubUa Instagram instagram.com/veteran_hub

Pryncyp, Human Rights Center for the Military is a public organization founded in 2023 for legal protection of military personnel and veterans. Their priority goal is to protect the dignity of the military and keep the accompanying processes transparent. To achieve this, they work in the following areas: legal education of military personnel and veterans, their relatives and friends to raise their awareness of the existing mechanisms and opportunities during treatment and rehabilitation; analytical work to develop systemic solutions in reforming the system; advocacy of changes in this system in collaboration with the authorities.

Website: pryncyp.com, Facebook: fb.com/pryncypua

Space of Opportunities is an innovative lab that implements a modern concept of veteran's policies from the central to regional levels. The organization implements innovative practices in the field relating to veterans, through data analysis, surveys, research, and the study of essential needs of both ultimate beneficiaries (veterans) and the state's demand. We pilot and scale up our own projects through the Veteran Spaces Coalition – a community including 23 organizations, which is coordinated by Space of Opportunities in Lviv, Lutsk, Zhytomyr, Rivne, Vinnytsia, Sumy, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Chernihiv, Kramatorsk, Cherkasy, Khmelnytskyi and other cities.

Website: pm.in.ua, Facebook: facebook.com/place.of.opportunities

Legal Hundred is the all-Ukrainian non-profit public organization whose mission is to protect human rights in the context of military service and create legal mechanisms for the reintegration of veterans into society. Since 2016, they have taken part in drawing up the texts of more than 20 draft laws, and also state strategies and programs related to the social and legal protection of participants in the Russo-Ukrainian War. They have established the Project Office on the basis of the organization with the purpose to create the Ministry of Veterans Affairs in Ukraine. More than 137,000 people have received free legal aid through the organizations' hotline since 2014, and they continue to receive more than 4,000 requests every month. They have also developed and are constantly improving a comprehensive legal guide – "Instruction Book for Participants in the Russo-Ukrainian War".

Website: legal100.org.ua, Facebook: facebook.com/yursotnya

Author's Note

Joining the ranks of the Security and Defense Forces, warriors take on a challenging journey, risking their life, and eventually returning home from service. The transition out of the military, though much awaited, often becomes the continuation of the ordeal of war, and not an instant relief from its burden.

We must recognize that not all sacrifices and losses may be compensated. By carrying out their civic duty of military service during the war, warriors give up much more than their health, civilian professional qualities, or income. For us all to feel safe, they give up time they could have spent with their loved ones, and this time is lost forever. They give up their own civilian identity, which is never going to be just the same anymore. They sacrifice their memory, which will from now on carry the legacy of those who were killed in battle.

The policies of previous decades have proven wrong and unfair towards Ukrainian veterans and their families, and have led to multiple lasting and negative consequences for their lives and well-being.

We, the expert community of veterans affairs specialists, representatives of established and professional non-governmental and charitable organizations, have united and developed our common vision of the future Ukrainian state policy on veterans and their families.

Each of the organizations that we represent works daily with and for veterans of the Russo-Ukrainian War, provides charitable services and support to Ukrainian warriors and their families.

There is no single true policy. We believe that the best way to develop a fair and comprehensive policy is through open professional discussion. To bolster this discussion, we offer our best knowledge and opinions up for consideration, covered in this document. We offer to the Ukrainian government our own expertise to develop the following state policy on veterans and their families, as well as consultations in developing supporting documentation.

The suggestions outlined in this document are based on many years of our experience in the field of veterans affairs, expert analysis of Ukrainian, foreign research and analytical expertise, policies for veterans of other countries. We do not have access to classified information concerning Ukrainian warriors and veterans, so we may only make assumptions about the scope of the problem, based on the information obtained during meetings with representatives of government authorities.

We believe that it is our common duty to take care of those who protect our lives while risking their own. The document below provides a detailed analysis of our version of the policy and its rationale.

Respectfully yours,
authors of the document

Introduction

Today, as every day in the last decade, over a million Ukrainian warriors defend Ukraine in the war unleashed by Russia, and protect our lives with their daily heroic deeds. Day after day, they gain combat experience, develop professional skills and fight for Ukraine's right to independence and sovereignty.

Since 2014, Ukrainian warriors, who have been wounded, have reached the upper age limit or have had some urgent family affairs to attend to, quit their military services during the war. Today, same as for the past 10 years, the journey of a Ukrainian veteran is a journey of a warrior, and the transition to civilian life tends to be the continuation of the challenge of war, rather than an instant relief from its burden. The challenges that veterans face in civilian life are expectable, taking into account their experience. These challenges turn into problems when the environment and community are inaccessible or even hostile to veterans, unable to gain insight into their experience, and do not provide appropriate support. Although most veterans are going to successfully overcome the challenges upon transition,¹ almost everybody will need at least some basic support.²

The current state policy on veterans and their families poses certain risks for its beneficiaries and the entire Ukrainian society.

Single state policy on veterans and their families is:

1. A component of the global strategy of the Ukrainian economic breakthrough.
2. The basis of national security and defense capabilities.
3. Prerequisite for the development of a modern Ukrainian political nation.

Ukrainian warriors deserve the highest level of recognition and support in Ukrainian society. The state policy on veterans and their families must guarantee a decent and safe journey to civilian life for each Ukrainian warrior.

To us, a single state policy is a declared and specified approach of the government, backed up by real actions and funding, aimed at recognition and support for veterans and their families throughout their lives, which:

- Reveals the purpose of such a policy;
- Specifies the target audience;
- Describes tools to identify needs and mechanisms for their implementation;
- Defines tools to assess the effectiveness and impact of support on the lives and well-being of veterans and their families.

The state policy should also clearly outline and communicate the prospects of their lives to people, openly and transparently. Veterans and their families have the right to know and understand the perspective of their own lives, build up realistic expectations, and have some conceptual foresight in their interaction with the government.

¹ (see Elnitsky, Fisher, & Blevins, 2017, for a comprehensive review)

² (Castro & Kintzle, 2014)

Accordingly, we have to admit that today there is no properly developed single state policy in Ukraine, with a comprehensive and consistent approach to veterans and their families. The state's actions in relation to veterans, identifying their needs and finding implementation tools are inconsistent, unsystematic, and often focused on false priorities. Present approaches also have outdated paternalistic attributes. Moreover, the state is even unable to provide the guarantees of social protection to veterans that are declared in the current legislation.

If nothing changes, in the coming years veterans who will be rebuilding their lives after transitioning out of the military, might feel that the attitude of the state and society to their experience and needs is incommensurable with their actions and sacrifices to the state's survival.

Change is essential, and possible.

We have set ourselves an ambitious goal – to develop a framework concept of a state policy on veterans and their families, which will reveal the purpose of such a policy, its beneficiaries and required systemic changes to implement the new policy in the modern legislative environment. In this document, we suggest a basic approach to the development of a single state policy, specify our priority tasks and outline the required action plan for Ukraine to properly welcome its warriors back home. Proper recognition of the life experience of Ukrainian warriors and veterans, caring for them and their families and enriching society with their knowledge are the priorities of our group.

First, we have analyzed past experience and the underlying reasons for the current state's approach to veterans and their families, and outlined the risks of maintaining such a status quo. In the section ["How we ended up in this situation?"](#), we mention the Soviet legacy relating to veterans affairs, which was not properly rethought after gaining independence, and eventually became the basis of both the government's, and societal approaches to veterans from 2014 onwards.

We have outlined the key goal of the state policy and its three integral components, as well as their key objectives.

Key goal	Ensure the existential survival of Ukraine.
Component 1	Express respect and gratitude from the state and its citizens for protecting the independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine
Component 2	Ensure the state's defense capability and security
Component 3	Take care of the well-being of warriors and the economic stability of the state

Relying upon the best practices of other countries, we described options for determining the status of veterans and analyzed the necessary amendments to be introduced into the Ukrainian legislation. In the section ["Policy beneficiaries"](#), we suggest an updated definition of the status of veterans in Ukraine and outline the new logic for applying social statuses.

Veterans take their own journey, but they don't take it alone. Their families have their own unique experiences that deserve recognition and appropriate support. We have focused on the importance

of involving families as subjects and beneficiaries of the state policy, while also pointing out the significant lack of data for developing detailed solutions. The experience, sacrifices and needs of the families of veterans should be legally identified and addressed, becoming an integral part of the policy on veterans and their families.

Based on the experiences of the generation of ATO/JFO veterans, who served in 2014-2022, we identified three key policy implementation environments for veterans and their families that differ significantly in the living conditions and opportunities of policy beneficiaries: military service, reserve force, and civilian life. All veterans share a common experience, as well as similar impact and needs arising from it. However, the purpose of state policy and its implementation tools will differ depending on the environment in which veterans continue their journey. We also point out that it is likely that the majority of Ukrainian veterans will continue their journey in the environment of military service and reserve force in the next decade, which, in turn, do not take into account and address the needs of veterans properly. Regardless of the implementation environment, the policy on veterans and their families will affect the state and Ukrainian society at three major levels: national security, socio-economic development and human capital asset, the development of the modern Ukrainian nation and collective memory.

We also suggest a basic approach to identifying the needs of veterans and their families. It is based on seven principles and proceeds from the statement that Ukrainian warriors have different experience of military service and combat operations, therefore they and their families have different needs. However, government tools for identifying needs should be transparent and consistent. Therefore, the state policy on veterans should logically and consistently recognize the impact of combat experience and service in times of war, and offer opportunities to compensate for this impact through appropriate support, services, protection of rights and a system of agreed privileges. This support should become accessible, sustainable, and long-lasting, covering all stages of the veteran's journey.

We believe that effective mitigation actions, aimed at clearly defined needs of veterans and their families will both support them in the best possible way, and significantly strengthen the stability of Ukrainian society in the security, economic, social, and political domains. In our opinion, this approach will also streamline budget expenditures, help avoid duplication of efforts and promote more efficient use of state and community funds.

With regard to the general logic of changes, we have analyzed the needs of veterans and systemic obstacles to their solution based on the well-being approach, and provided our suggestions for possible solutions.

Finally, we have suggested an updated architecture of the veterans affairs field. We believe that policies on veterans and their families should be cross-cutting, coordinated at the central level, reflected in regional and local policies, and adjusted to each implementation environment. We have identified the key strategic solutions necessary to implement the updated policy and suggested a significant expansion of the planning horizon, in accordance with the key principles of this policy.

At the end of the document, we discuss the risks that we have noted during our work, and reveal our own advocacy plans for extending this framework and its further discussion.

Key Definitions And List Of Abbreviations

State policy means a complex or system of government authorities' actions aimed at solving certain issues of society.

Well-being is a categorization of various human needs, necessary for a comprehensive analysis of the state, functionality and satisfaction in people in relation to various aspects of their life. In this document, we build on the well-being conceptualization developed by Veteran Hub in collaboration with IREX, as part of the Veterans Reintegration Program supported by the U.S. Department of State.

The journey of veterans is a study of the experience of Ukrainian ATO/SFO veterans implemented by Veteran Hub in collaboration with IREX, as part of the Veterans Reintegration Program supported by the U.S. Department of State.

Policy implementation environment is the combination of infrastructure, partners, resources and mechanisms created to ensure proper conditions for the introduction and implementation of strategic goals, objectives and steps provided for by the state policy.

TRSSC stands for territorial recruitment and social support center, formerly known as military commissariats.

MMC stands for military medical commission.

ATO stands for Anti-Terrorist Operation (active from February 20, 2014 till April 30, 2018 in parts of temporarily occupied Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine).

JFO stands for Joint Forces Operation (active from April 30, 2018 till February 24, 2022 in parts of temporarily occupied Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine).

WV stands for war veteran.

CEA stands for the central executive authority.

RMA stands for regional military administration.

Combat experience means knowledge and skills acquired by a person during participation in combat operations.

Social status means the position of a person in the social structure of society.

Regulatory framework means documents establishing rules, principles, characteristics of various types of activities and their outcomes.

Operational reserve means citizens of Ukraine who have a record of past military experience and voluntarily agreed to serve in the active or standby reserve.

Mobilization reserve means all citizens liable for military service who are fit or partially fit for military service.

Beneficiary means a person or other entity that benefits from a certain activity.

Stakeholder means a participant in the process, a person/organization/body that influences the process.

SSUIS stands for Social Services Unified Information System.

USRWV stands for Unified State Register of War Veterans.

Why Is The State Policy On Veterans And Their Families An Urgent Issue Today?

National security

- There are no deadlines to a war. Following presumable end of active hostilities, the war may resume at any time.
- Veterans are the essential combat capability of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.
- Veterans are the mainstay of all the operational reserves.
- Policy on veterans and their families is part of programs promoting the status value of the military profession.
- The presence of human-centered policymaking for veterans and their families distinguishes NATO member countries.

Socio-economic development and restoration of human capital

- One of the consequences of Russia's direct and hybrid war against Ukraine is the ultimate aggravation of the demographic crisis in Ukraine, the weakening of human capital assets, and the lack of labor resources.
- The policy on veterans and their families is a component of all programs aimed at restoring the human capital of Ukraine.
- The policy on veterans and their families, in terms of the reintegration of all target audiences, is aimed at strengthening the economic resilience and social stability of society.
- Restoring functionality in the rehabilitation process is a basic principle of effective socio-economic reintegration of various target audiences of the policy.

Development of the modern Ukrainian nation and collective memory

- The paradigm of the Russo-Ukrainian War develops in the existential context of the existence of the Ukrainian nation as it is.
- Veterans are promoters of modern socio-cultural values of the Ukrainian nation.
- The Russo-Ukrainian War creates prerequisites for changing the current cultural paradigm of defining the Ukrainian nation and its meaning in the world context.

What We Have Now And What Needs To Change

The state policy on veterans and their families has not been sufficiently developed, and the system of veteran statuses and government support for veterans does not meet the realities of our time and the needs of beneficiaries.

To us, a single state policy means the declared and specified approach of the state to support veterans and their families, which reveals the purpose of such support, its target audience, tools and mechanisms to provide support, and also tools to estimate their effectiveness.

The existing model of interaction between the authorities and veterans is inefficient, imitative and outdated, it does not meet the expectations of beneficiaries. However, the main drawback of the current model is the lack of incentives for effective reintegration of veterans and their involvement in active social life.

What to expect if approaches to the development and implementation of state policies for veterans and their families fail to change?

The current model of interaction between the state and the veterans is determined by the following principal features:

- Paternalism in interaction.
- Declarative nature of social guarantees (insecurity).
- Complete absence or minimal impact of incentive tools.
- "Institutional indifference" at the community level (veterans are left without support).
- Uncoordinated programs/actions of different stakeholders.

Today and tomorrow (after Ukraine's victory), the target audience of the policy on veterans and their families will cover between 10 to 30 percent of the population of Ukraine, and people with combat experience have already become the basis of Ukrainian security and defense sectors. Before, when the target audience of the policy on veterans and their families made up only 1.5 percent of the total population, the existing approach simply did not manifest itself at a large scale. However, for the expert community, failures in the development and implementation of policies on veterans and their families were obvious, and they could also be seen at the level of individual social phenomena.

Transition to civilian life is part of the warrior's journey. It requires significant time and support from people around. Although the experience of returning to civilian life will be different for every person, the majority of needs and processes are similar for veterans in Ukraine and around the world. With proper support, most veterans have a positive transition experience and they successfully rebuild their civilian life. However, veterans who are deprived of such support tend to experience a significantly reduced well-being, which in turn can affect society at large.

Since 2014, those who have defended the territorial integrity of independent Ukraine (combat participants, war veterans, people with war-related disabilities) are also granted a veteran status in Ukraine. These are both regular military personnel, volunteers and military personnel who served after being mobilized.

During the first eight years of war, the number of veterans increased to 670,458 people (as of January 2022). The number of military personnel involved in active service during the full-scale Russian invasion is still classified information. [The expert estimates range from 1.5–2 million warriors engaged in the Defense Forces](#). Due to the full-scale Russian invasion the number of combat participants, their family members and families of fallen warriors, may reach five million people and more, according to forecasts of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine.

The legislative definition of the status of a veteran differs significantly from the public definition, and the available state support programs do not meet neither the needs of veterans, nor the real capabilities of the government. Consequently, veterans are often not provided with proper state support after completing their military service. Existing programs often become inaccessible to veterans and their families due to a number of obstacles, in particular, excessive bureaucratization, poor regulatory framework, absence of eligible information and developed customer journeys, duration of decision-making, logistical unavailability, etc.

Therefore, imitation in the development and implementation of state policies for veterans is a direct threat to national security and economic sustainability.

The existing model of interaction with veterans will inevitably lead to such social phenomena as:

- Marginalization of veterans.
- Collapse of the social sector.
- Collapse of the healthcare system.
- Failure of the government to comply with the guarantees established for veterans.
- Increase in the burden on all-level budgets
- Deterioration of the state's defense capability.
- Loss of human capital assets:
 - veterans move abroad
 - veterans disappear as a factor of economic relations
- Mutual social disappointment (a veteran does not trust the authorities, the society is disappointed in a veteran).
- Increased tension and unprecedented level of crime.

How Did We End Up In This Situation?

20th century

At first glance, it may seem that Ukraine has never had a policy on veterans and their families. In a certain way, this is true, because during the Soviet occupation, Ukraine could not independently develop and implement policies towards its citizens, and after gaining independence, it took on previous approaches to governance in the majority of areas. Unlike western democracies, the Ukrainian scientific society cannot boast of more than a century of knowledge and recorded experience in interacting with veterans. However, veterans have been returning from all wars in which Ukrainians took part, and society and, in particular, the Soviet regime and the Ukrainian state after it gained its independence, recognized their status in a certain way and provided some support.

When drawing up this guideline, we addressed the available evidence from the history of Ukrainian veterans of many generations: those who fought in the national liberation movement of 1917-1921, in particular the Ukrainian National Army; the Red Army and the UPA in World War II; the Soviet–Afghan War, because it had been the experience of past generations that laid the legislative and semantic foundations for the modern Ukrainian approach to veterans and their families.

We have more extensive data available on the generation of World War II veterans. After the war was over, the military were granted a special social definition of Heroic Front Participants. The Soviet regime introduced a basic list of benefits, which, in particular, concerned the right to keep and use their military uniforms, employment according to the rank and obtaining awards. They were receiving certain benefits from 1945 till 1948, until the demobilization was completed.³ As early as 1946, all payments and benefits for veterans granted state awards were canceled.

Upon the abolition of all benefits in 1948, veterans with disabilities were getting some small pension payments, although this did not apply to high-ranking veterans. Veterans living in large cities were paid a higher pension compared to veterans from rural areas. Already in the 1950s, those people in their majority were on the breadline.

There was also a notion of "occupational therapy" introduced. In 1944-1945, there were special regulations issued with regard to the employment of veterans with disabilities. Veterans holding the rank of an officer or having experience they had gained yet before the war could get a job in the culture sector (they were employed as heads of culture centers, teachers, etc.) in the area where ideological activities had to be conducted.⁴ However, most of them were sent to mass production facilities, where manual labor was required. These veterans could not choose their own profession and place of work.

Besides, even veterans with first group disability status were required to have their disability annually confirmed by a special medical commission, otherwise the disability status could be canceled.⁵

³ Decree of September 10, 1947 "On the Privileges and Benefits Granted to Those Awarded with Orders and Medals of the USSR". Compilation of laws of the USSR and Decrees of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. 1938 – July 1956/edited by PhD in Law Y. I. Mandelshtam I Moscow: State Academic Legal Research Publishing House, 1956. – pp. 300–301.

⁴ Military Personnel of the Soviet State in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945./edited by A. P. Beloborodova M., 1963, p. 441.

⁵ National Economy of the USSR in 1958. – M.: Gosstatizdat (State Statistical Publishing House), 1959, p. 185.

As for self-employment, veterans were only allowed to do it by the early 1950s, since such activities contradicted the communist model of the Soviet totalitarian regime. But, given that people had to somehow get the means to live, they still made efforts to become entrepreneurs unofficially (and sometimes illegally), thus falling into the area of criminal liability.

From 1946 to 1978, veterans, except for "disabled combat veterans", did not legally exist as a separate category of citizens. Veterans who had built up horizontal linkages during their military service began to develop grassroots associations and communication, at the national level, in particular, which often contradicted the regime's policies. These associations were banned and persecuted, with only one pro-government Veterans Union functioning during the Soviet regime. In 1956, the Organization of Soviet War Veterans was founded, headed by the Soviet Committee of War Veterans, which had no right to establish local branches.

Khrushchev's pension reform unified legislation for various categories of "people with disabilities"⁶, increasing pension payments for some of them, but keeping the basic principle of their accrual. Pension payments for military "people with disabilities" were increased in 1959 and 1964.

As late as 1978, the Soviet regime headed by Brezhnev for the first time recognized veterans as a separate category of the population and introduced a short list of benefits.⁷ They were presented not as a duty of the state to grant them to people, but as gifts and care for which veterans should be grateful. Therefore, they encouraged the political commitment of the loyal stratum of society, instead of meeting the actual needs of people having combat experience. "Wrong" veterans, that is, those disloyal to the regime, were subjected to pressure, in particular, through the tools of excessive bureaucratization of getting state guarantees. People were forced to wait to get necessary certificates and documents for years.

There had been awareness raising campaigns conducted introducing the notion that their own families must help and support the veterans, but not the government. The media and publications of that time were promoting bright images of veterans who returned home from the frontline and perfectly fit into society: they started a new family, got a job, etc. They were developing a happy image of a soldier who returned from the frontline, and it was only his family to heal his physical and mental wounds. In reality, if a veteran lost his family, there was no one else to take care of him.

It is remarkable that a woman of that time was presented as an image of shelter, psychological compensation, and irreplaceable help in fulfilling veterans in their new life. At the same time, there were no images of women with disabilities in the public space, and veteran women were subjected to discrimination and additional harassment, which often made them bury their past and never mention it.

In 1965, there was a new increase in pensions paid for war veterans with disabilities, with subsequent increases in 1967, 1973, and 1975. In 1975, benefits for this category related to using public transport, healthcare, housing, payment of utility bills, access to purchasing specially

⁶ It is a term that was applied in the legislation of that time

⁷ by Resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR No. 907 of November 10, 1978 "On Measures to Further Improve the Living Conditions of Participants in the Great Patriotic War"
<https://www.economics.kiev.ua/download/ZakonySSSR/data02/tex13940.htm>

equipped cars, and so on. By 1978, there were far fewer veterans left, given the premature death rate due to the consequences of war, moreover, that generation began to retire due to old age.

There were also closed camps for veterans with disabilities established on the territory of the USSR for those veterans who could not go back to social life, did not have a family, housing and job. In 1951, a Decree "On Combating Antisocial, Parasitic Elements" was issued, and in three years about half a million beggars were detained under this order. Among them, up to 70 percent were veterans with disabilities.⁸

Veterans with disabilities were unwelcome in public places, nevertheless the regime was promoting the image of a veteran superhero who overcame his problems by force of his will. The novel "How the Steel Was Tempered" glamorized the image of a veteran who was able to establish his own life independently, without state medical or social assistance. This was in contrast with reality and served as a reproach to all those who could not build their life independently, with the problems of veterans considered to be their own personal problems.

Veterans of the Soviet–Afghan War had similar problems and were the first generation after the end of World War II to experience poorly developed and rather inhumane policy towards veterans. After completing their service, they did not receive proper support and recognition of the influence of their experience from the Soviet regime and faced additional challenges, because their recovery was to be carried out in the time of "perestroika" and the restoration of Ukraine's independence.

At the same time, the Soviet and later Russian regimes only increased the abuse of the image of World War II veterans and the myth of the "Great Patriotic War", in particular, through holding "Victory Day" parades, which became a regular annual event only in 1995, and were also held in Ukraine.

Having gained its independence, Ukraine has assumed responsibility for supporting aging veterans of World War II, Soviet–Afghan War and other generations of veterans. Gradually, the state recognized OUN/UPA veterans, too, although decent support and services were never implemented properly.

21st century

After the shooting of the Heavenly Hundred on February 18–20, 2014, the Russian Federation illegally annexed the Crimean Peninsula and launched an invasion of Ukraine, which led to the temporary occupation of parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, and in 2022 it expanded the war to the rest of Ukraine.

The defence of Ukraine, protection of its sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability shall be entrusted to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (Article 17 of the Constitution of Ukraine).

Until then, independent Ukraine did not participate in active combat operations (except for an insignificant number of peacekeeping missions), and the Armed Forces consisted of conscripts and regular military personnel, who were not enough to repel the attack and deter the military threat from

⁸ On measures to prevent and eliminate beggary: report of the Ministry of Internal affairs of the USSR to the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU dated February 20, 1954.
<https://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/almanah/inside/almanah-doc/1007415>

the Russian Federation. Since 2014, not only the Armed Forces of Ukraine have been involved in the Defense Forces, but also the National Guard, the National Police, the State Border Service and other law enforcement agencies, for which participation in combat operations is not typical.

[The Law of Ukraine "On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection"](#), adopted in 1993, coincides with identical Soviet law in many ways. It was not subjected to semantic modernization, and later became the basis for the introduction of support for the Ukrainian military after 2014, because apart from the generation of veterans of already independent Ukraine (ATO/SFO, Russo-Ukrainian War), smaller generations of combat experience carriers, in particular veterans of the World War II, veterans of Afghanistan, veterans of the OUN and UPA, are still living among Ukrainian society.

In simple terms, in 2014 we offered veterans the same support that had been suggested to the generations of veterans during the Soviet era: health resort treatment, priority to obtain a land plot, a number of benefits and discounts.

At the same time, generations of modern Ukrainian veterans are the first combat experience carriers in more than a century, who have been unquestioningly recognized and supported by Ukraine, its people and government. These warriors who have been defending Ukraine since 2014 until present, are creating the first original Ukrainian veteran identification. It is for them to determine what it means to be a Ukrainian soldier and veteran.

Identified Problem No.1

Current government's approach to veterans and their families still has features inherent to the Soviet regime, as it has not been properly elaborated since Ukraine has gained its independence.

We highlight the following key features of the existing approach:

- A paternalistic approach to identifying and meeting needs.
- Outdated legal framework regulating relations in the field of veterans affairs.
- Guarantees to meet the needs of veterans and their families are unrealistic and virtual to the great extent, with policies being more declarative in their nature.
- Lack of transparency and insufficient elaboration of basic definitions and proper terminology regarding the specific aspects of defining the audience, its needs, and implementation tools.

Suggested Solution

Developing a new state policy on veterans and their families.

Today, the basic definition of the expert community is the thesis that people are the main value of the state. Therefore, when we talk about the consequences of the Victory and the prospects for the restoration of the country, and its upgrade, we first of all mean the importance of restoring people and their well-being.

Effective state policy on veterans and their families

RECOGNITION

Recognize the unique experiences of veterans and their families and clearly define their status

UNDERSTANDING

- Define the impact of the experience of the veterans and their families, and the arising needs
- Define the goal and ways to support veterans and their families
- Define the necessary support for veterans and their families at all stages of their journey
- Co-direct the efforts of government authorities, civil society and international community to ensure support
- Define the standards of providing such support

ACTIONS

We Should Consider the Following

To ensure a comprehensive approach and effectiveness of the policy, its development should take place with the involvement of all stakeholders on the part of the government, the public sector, beneficiaries and the community. At the same time, we should realize that the main, leading part in the development, coordination and control of the implementation of such a policy should be assigned to one specific institution, which in turn should coordinate the work of all government authorities within the framework of the state policy on veterans and their families (for further information, see "Veterans Affairs System Architecture").

The Purpose Of The State Policy On Veterans And Their Families

We, Ukrainian people, while struggling for our life and Independence, are developing, realizing and strengthening our own identity, our response to the questions “who are we”, “where are we from” and “what do we stand for”. Defending our common values, way of life and people, Ukrainian warriors have become heroes of the new Ukrainian ethos for good. The identity of a warrior is one of the fundamental components of the national identity of Ukraine.

"We are warriors, not some lazybones and idlers. We do righteous and saintly work. To fight for our independence is the top priority for us. And that's a hard thing to do" says Lina Kostenko

The journey of a veteran is the journey of a warrior. Joining the ranks of the Security and Defense Forces, warriors take a challenging road, they risk life and limb and eventually return home from their service. The long-awaited return home continues the ordeal of war, it is not about an instant relief at all. Therefore, the state policy on veterans shall be an integral component of the state's defense and security policies.

Key goal: to make sure that Ukraine survives.

Well-elaborated policy on veterans and their families shall be a component of the security and existential survival of Ukraine.

To achieve this, the state policy on veterans and their families is to pursue three explicit objectives:

Objective 1: to show public respect and appreciation for fulfilling their civic duty and protection of state's interests – people, values, way of life and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Respect and appreciation begin with an appropriate recognition of the warriors' contribution, their sacrifice, and the impact they experience during their military service. Only those who stood shoulder to shoulder on the battlefield are able to truly understand the meaning of the experience of warriors. Civil society and government leaders may well be guided by the information policy and the government's vision to support veterans.

"The government must take responsibility for warriors as they take responsibility to defend us", says Denys Kvebek.

Objectives

- 1.1. Guarantee recognition of the life journey of veterans and their families
- 1.2. Show public appreciation and respect for the experience of veterans and their families

Component of Objective 2: Ensure the State's Defense Capability and Security

Veterans and their experience serve as a role model or example for those who will join military service in the future. A sense of belonging to a rank that is properly recognized by the state serves as a motivation for those who will follow the journey of a Ukrainian soldier. In particular, looking back at the situation of how the government and society supported veterans after their return home, new military personnel would think twice before investing their time and health, risking their lives to protect the country. Therefore, the policy on veterans and their families is inextricably linked with the defense strategy and the promotion of the status value of military service, which should serve as an incentive for future warriors.

Also, effective veteran policies, both in terms of reintegration and honoring their memory, are the driving force for increasing the status value of the military profession as a whole. By implementing projects aimed at honoring the fallen heroes, respect for demobilized servicemen and effective reintegration of veterans, we will consolidate Ukrainian society in respectful attitude to the image of a military, thereby encouraging young people to become part of the Security and Defense Forces of Ukraine.

Objectives

- 2.1. Uphold the status value of military service and government's protection
- 2.2. Make caring for Ukrainian veterans a visible and tangible social rule
- 2.3. Develop strong bond between veterans and military personnel

Component of Objective No. 3: Take Care of warriors' well-being and the Economic Stability of the State

We see the prospect of social and economic reintegration of veterans and their families through the basic attitude that veterans are the core of Ukraine's human capital. In this regard, we also consider several dimensions of this problem. On the one hand, effective tools are being developed to meet the needs of the audience of the policy on veterans and their families in terms of education, employment, support for entrepreneurial initiative, participation in government and politics. On the other hand, the outcome of such reintegration mechanisms should be the strengthening of economic stability of the state, regions and communities, preserving labor resources, developing small and medium-sized businesses, and overcoming possible negative consequences in the social protection sector. We must recognize that not all losses may be compensated. By carrying out their civic duty of military service during the war, warriors lose much more than their health, professional qualities, or income. For us to feel safe, they give away time they could spend with their nearest and dearest, and they lose that time forever. They give away their own civil identity, which would never be the same, and their memory, which would hold from now on the memories difficult to cope with.

Combat experience provides a lifelong impact on the lives and well-being of veterans. Society must properly support the veterans, help them restore and recover those elements of well-being that have

been possibly based on a professional approach to the development of policies and programs, responsibility for declared guarantees, and to meet the actual experience and needs of veterans.

An individual, his life and health, honour and dignity, inviolability and security shall be recognised in Ukraine as the highest social value. (Article 3 of the Constitution of Ukraine)

Objectives

- 3.1. Restore justice and provide equal opportunities in civilian life, compensating for measurable losses resulting from the experience of veterans and civilians.
- 3.2. Provide opportunities, resources and support so that veterans can independently choose their further civilian activities and live their lives in their own way.
- 3.3. Facilitate a positive journeyway of veterans in civilian life.

Principles Of The Policy On Veterans And Their Families

1. **Veterans and their families are citizens of Ukraine, and they have the right to proper services and support from all providers.**

Identified Problem No. 2

Regardless of the environment of the policy's implementation, Ukrainian veterans and their families continue on their journeys as citizens of Ukraine, they should be provided cross-cutting representation and access to all services and programs in the state, business and society. There should be no government's action or decision taken that may lead to the exclusion or discrimination of veterans and their families.

Suggested Solution

Creating a comprehensive map of stakeholders of the policy on veterans and their families from among government agencies, communities, businesses, international donors, etc., and conducting a detailed analysis of challenges and priorities when interacting with them.

The stakeholder map should take into account and study the expertise of various levels of interaction: from state policy to direct service delivery, with regard to the specific aspects of their providers.

Developing solutions for timely crisis support for veterans and their families in the cases where systemic solutions do not work, and making sure that veterans and their families are informed about the possibilities of such assistance. Regardless of the number of prevention programs, all veterans and their families should receive support, and be provided opportunities, and resources when needed;

We Should Consider the Following

Most veterans and their families successfully overcome the challenges that their experience entails. However, returning back to normal life is a long-lasting process, and veterans, like all people, may face even more challenges and difficult situations in their life. State policy is to keep its positions when changing the scope of implementation in relation to a person, that is, when veterans and their families start interacting with the government in the field in which parallel systems of providing services are functioning, for example, the penitentiary system, and so on.

Like all citizens, veterans and their families have the right to an honest public dialogue. The right to know the prospects of their military service to be able to plan their further life, the right to know the actual scope of government's assistance they can count on, the right to be provided transparent and accessible support. It is necessary to guarantee cross-cutting and comprehensible awareness raising among beneficiaries, made in simple words and by accessible means.

2. The government Must Know Its Veterans and Their Families and Understand Their Needs.

Veterans are experienced military personnel, carriers of combat experience gained while protecting the state's interests. Suggested definition will be inclusive in respect of people who meet the criteria for experience, regardless of the historical period of their military service. This approach allows to build up a preventive policy and leave the cycle of reactive disparate decisions inherent in the Ukrainian field of veterans affairs in the past.

Identified Problem No. 3

Today, we have not enough data for the informed development of a comprehensive state policy on veterans and their families. The approach to collecting data on the people liable for conscription and military personnel does not take into account the needs of the policy on veterans and their families, and is often unsystematic and/or incomplete.

Suggested Solution

1. Reconsidering and managing the collection of data on those liable for military service and military personnel, with due account for the needs of the policy on veterans and their families; developing a decision on the access of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs to these data or analytical derivations based on them.
2. Ensuring the proper functioning of the Register of veterans and their families and cross-cutting identification of veterans in all state registers and systems, in particular with regard to social protection and healthcare.
Proper functioning of the Unified State Register of War Veterans (hereinafter referred to as the USRWV) should be a priority of state policy on veterans and their families. This will allow to collect and process the necessary information about the well-being and needs of veterans and make forecasting, mapping, prioritizing needs, government intervention, monitoring actually possible when it comes to millions of veterans and their families.
Full-fledged functioning of the Register and the exchange of data with other state registers and databases will allow to analyze age groups, regions of residence, gender, social and legal statuses, and other characteristics of veterans, which is important when planning programs or budgeting at the level of central and local authorities.
3. Developing a cross-cutting architecture for collecting and sharing data and analytics to raise awareness of a single state policy on veterans and their families. Introducing the exchange of information about veterans between different state systems.

We Should Consider the Following

The policy should ensure the inclusion of various segments of veterans and their families, and in-depth study of their needs when making decisions. It is important to distinguish veterans not only by gender, but also seek to identify other factors, such as, but not exclusively, age, region of residence, experience of internal displacement, length of military service, civilian experience, etc.

Further, with sufficient data at hand, it will be possible to trace certain trends, depending on demographic and other characteristics, and develop more precise suggestions for government support.

It is important to keep in mind that veterans and their families are, in particular, people who live in the military service and reserve force environment, and therefore their personal data needs additional protection, because, in fact, it is data on the personnel resource of the Security and Defense Forces. Any decisions to extend the collection and processing of data on veterans and their families should take into account significant security risks for the state and policy beneficiaries, and ensure an appropriate level of data protection at every stage. However, we think that without expending data and co-directing analytical processes, it will be impossible to build up a really high-quality policy, so it is necessary to develop a solution that will allow expanding knowledge about veterans, their families, the experience of these people and their needs.

3. State Policy Should Focus on a Person, and not on His or Her Status.

Based on the logic of the multiplicity of human experience and statuses, state policy should focus its efforts on a person, but not his or her status.

Identified Problem No. 4

Currently, there is no coordination of grassroots service providers along the journey of a veteran, there is no data exchange and high-quality redirection between them. Providers are poorly informed about other specialists who are available to veterans and do not have systematic communication with them.

Suggested Solution

Identifying a comprehensive list of state service providers for veterans and their families at each stage of their journey and developing a detailed customer route to identify problem areas in communication and customer redirection. Implementing interagency coordination and protocols for redirecting veterans and their families to get relevant services as part of a cross-cutting policy.

We Should Consider the Following

In the process of elaborating the customer route, it is important to study and take into account the experience of grassroots service providers, the real obstacles they face, because a significant part of the problems when interacting with veterans and their families lies not in the communication area, but arises due to systemic management problems, in particular:

- Absence of coordination between providers
- Insufficient staffing or staffing of poor quality
- Poorly elaborated methodological framework and service delivery protocols
- Lack of providers operating at the regional level, which leads to the inability to get services from an impartial employee (in small communities, veterans are more likely to personally know service providers, which can become an obstacle to confidentiality and trust).

4. Government's Actions Should Be Preventive, not Reactive.

Policy and program development should be professional, data-driven, made with regard to the needs and concerns of veterans and their families.

Identified Problem No. 5

Certain needs of veterans are developed under the impact of participation in combat operations – these are, in particular, consequences for physical and, in some cases, mental health, changes in professional competencies and, in some cases, partial or complete loss of competitiveness in the previous civilian profession, and so on. However, despite the prevailing stereotype, military service and war most commonly aggravate the problems that a person has faced before the service, rather than develop new ones. Therefore, foreseeing a large number of problems and challenges for veterans and their families is a feasible task provided that the necessary data and expertise are available in the state.

Suggested Solution

Strengthening the policy approach by early identification of risks to the well-being of veterans and their families, and preventing a negative trajectory. It is analytics, forecasting and prevention that should become the key objectives of the state policy on veterans. For this purpose, apart from the solutions described in other parts of this document, we need to:

- Build up the ability of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs to manage cross-cutting policies;

We Should Consider the Following

In our opinion, in the current state infrastructure, it is the Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Centers (TRSSC, former military enlistment offices) that have become the most successful positioning for interaction with veterans and their families at the beginning of service and at the beginning of civilian life. It is necessary to increase their ability to identify the level of well-being of veterans and their families, making them a part of subsequent support network. In particular, it is necessary to ensure a consistent methodological framework that is consistent with the cross-cutting policy, as well as training TRSSC's employees.

5. Veterans and Their Families Must Be Connected to a Lifelong Support Network They Could Rely on.

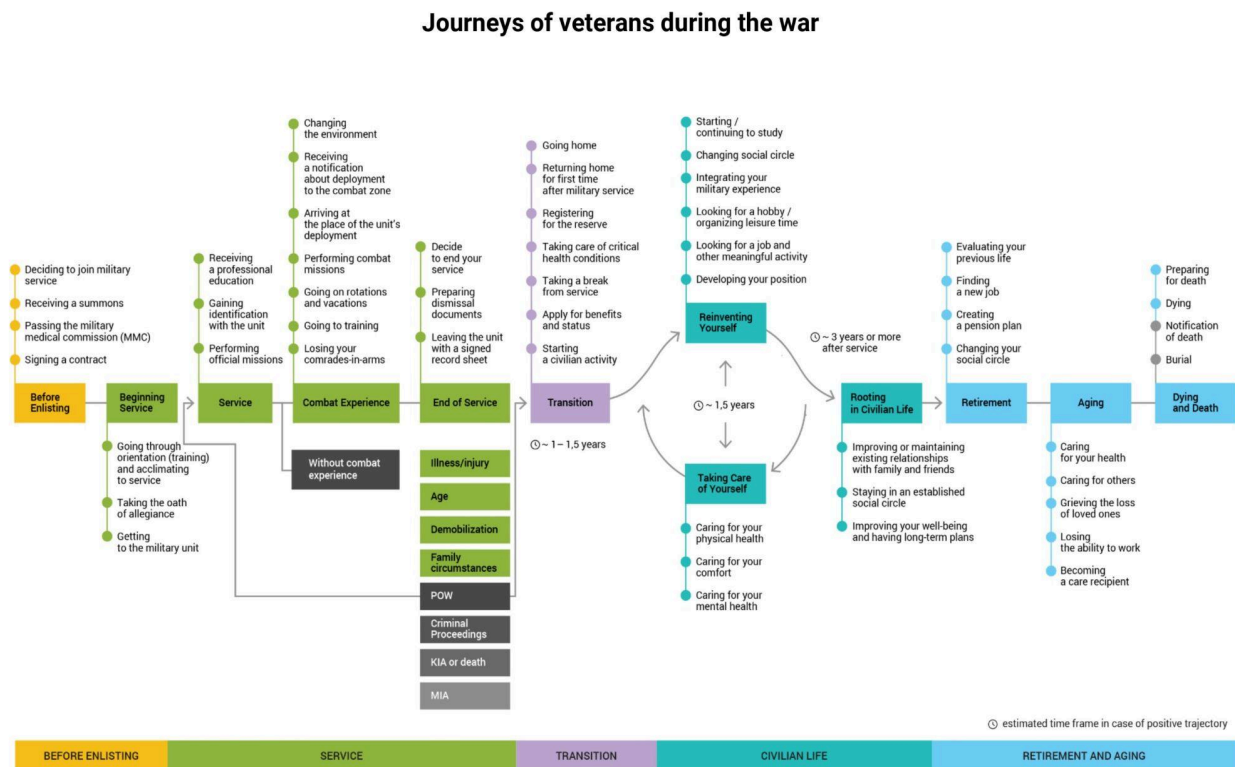
The experience of military service and combat operations affects the well-being of veterans throughout their lives. Returning back to normal life takes time, and each veteran will be going their own journey at their own pace, overcoming their own personal challenges. The logic of the policy on veterans and their families should recognize the huge impact that these people's lives and well-being have had, and address them throughout their lives.

Identified Problem No. 6

The current state system of veterans affairs is based on a static vision of human needs. In simple terms, the government offers veterans and their families the same type of support at all stages of life.

Suggested Solution

Building up the state policy on veterans and their families with their way of life taken into account, with due regard to different needs at different stages of life.



[The Veterans journey](#)⁹ can be taken as a basis for this approach

We Should Consider the Following

Veteran's journeys may vary depending on the circumstances of completing their military service and many other factors. It is necessary to expand the study of the variability of veteran's experience, and to detail the ways of other audiences of state policies, in particular, families of veterans, including families of prisoners, missing persons and fallen veterans, military personnel who have not got combat experience, and others.

Identified Problem No. 7

⁹ Experience map of the Ukrainian ATO/SFO veterans developed by Veteran Hub in collaboration with IREX as part of the Veterans Reintegration Program with the support of the U.S. Department of State.

The discourse around the state policy on veterans and their families focuses on the short-term horizon of action and meeting urgent needs, with a primary focus on the largest demographic groups (young and middle-age people, early stages of return, male audience, etc.).

Suggested Solution

Developing a strategy based on the policy on veterans and their families taking into account projected life expectancy of the generation of today's veterans, covering short-, medium-, and long-term periods, as well as action plans.

Developing a holistic portrait of the audience and identifying demographic factors that impact the veteran's experience. Taking into account these factors when planning programs and policies.

We Should Consider the Following

State policy on veterans and their families should take into account and equally prioritize support at all stages of life for veterans and their families, including end-of-life support.

State policy on veterans and their families should be accessible and convenient to all beneficiaries, developed with due regard to their differences and needs.

6. Veterans and Their Families Are Valuable Human Capital for Ukraine, and State Policy Should Make Their Fulfilment After Service Possible.

State policies for veterans should equally take into account their families' experiences and address the impact of those experiences on their well-being. The war affects the entire country and its population. However, the poorly developed system of mobilization and rotation of troops makes a significant gap appear between the capabilities of the military and civilians who did not serve in the Armed Forces during the war. Upon their return home, veterans will be competing in the civilian areas with those people who, unlike them, did not lose valuable time and continued to develop their own civilian capital. State support should be aimed at the soonest restoration of civilian well-being among veterans and their families, and offer appropriate opportunities and resources for their competitive fulfillment in the civilian environment.

Building up the updated vision of state policy, we need to highlight the fact that veterans and their families are valuable human capital for the future of Ukraine. Therefore, state policy should help improve their well-being and expand competitive opportunities for veterans and their families, regardless of the policy implementation environment.

Identified Problem No. 8

Approaches of the current policy towards veterans and their families in the post-Soviet states, in particular, and in Ukraine, did not have holistic and end-to-end programs for interacting with the families of military personnel and veterans. For the most part, these categories were considered as an appendage to the veterans or military personnel themselves. Special attention was paid to the

families only in the case of loss – death or in the case of people gone missing, under conditions of poorly developed system regarding veterans and their families

Suggested Solution

The best possible solution for family representatives is to participate in programs with subsequent work with veterans as specialists (psychologists, social workers, consultants, case managers, etc.). But we must understand that this program can be implemented **only if the person is psychologically capable of** providing high-quality reintegration or rehabilitation services in this category.

The state, due to new threats and challenges, has an urgent concern of preserving the institution of a family, which is able to conduct initial screening and first reintegration actions for veterans. It is this basic level that creates the prerequisites for the preservation and further restoration of human capital assets.

With due account for these basic guidelines, we should talk about developing comprehensive programs focused on working with this category. This also applies to the rehabilitation area, and certain programs of social and economic reintegration: education, employment, support for entrepreneurial initiatives, etc.

Another mission for the government is to develop targeted programs for working with the families of military personnel who have gone abroad during the war. They will be one of the key social groups on which programs for the restoration of human capital and their return to Ukraine should be focused. Otherwise, there is a great danger of losing the quality of labor resources and human capital of those military personnel who will be demobilized and willing to reunite with their families, who by that time will already be reintegrated into life in other countries and societies.

We Should Consider the Following

It should be noted that effective programs of interaction with the families of military personnel serving in the Defense Forces are the key to strengthening the motivation of Ukrainian warriors in particular, and therefore the country's defense capability as a whole.

7. State Policy Guarantees Recognition of the Veterans' Life journey.

One of the reasons for the Russo-Ukrainian War is the aggressor's denial of the fact and possibility of the very existence of the Ukrainian nation. The main argument is the basic ideological notion of the so-called "Russkiy Mir" ("Russian World"), which refuses to identify the Ukrainian cultural paradigm. And accordingly, everything inherent to Ukraine is denied as "created artificially".

Such cultural expansion of the enemy became possible due to the unclear worldview position of the Ukrainian political elite and the uncertainty of Ukrainian society regarding this issue. The tolerance with which the so-called Ukrainian political elite treated the enemy's ideological aggression was the prerequisite to starting the war. That is why today, analyzing all these prerequisites, we should talk about strengthening the Ukrainian ideological paradigm and upgrading the national idea around the principles and mythologems of the Russo-Ukrainian War. Therefore, heroic deeds of our Defenders

should be included in the updated modern concept of the Ukrainian nation. Subsequently, the issue of honoring, respecting and glorifying the image of Defenders is important for consolidating our nation and, accordingly, strengthening Ukraine's defense capability.

Over three decades have passed after Ukraine gained its independence in 1991, but the Ukrainian people are still paying a high price, defending its sovereignty, territorial integrity and their democratic choice.

Standing in defense of our country, each soldier and their families risk paying the highest price for the security of Ukraine. Over the past ten years, thousands of warriors have fallen on the battlefield, and their fellow warriors, relatives and friends will keep the memory of their life journey for good. It is the duty of the state to honor and commemorate personal contributions of fallen Ukrainian warriors, and to take care of their families.

The life journey of veterans may end after the war. Those who were lucky enough to return home would live forever keeping the memory of the war and all those who died. Veterans, like all people, may get sick, suffer from accidents, die of old age, and commit suicide. Regardless of the circumstances, veterans and their families must have access to quality care in the final stages of their life. Regardless of the time of death, the memory of the life journey of veterans should be properly honored, and the government is obliged to take care of and support their families. However, it is important to organize equal (systematic) care for each of the families, because social tension between the family members of the victims and the veterans who support them will not contribute to qualitative post-traumatic development.

Identified Problem No. 9

Absence of a unified, holistic concept of respecting, honoring and **reflecting/building of the image of Ukrainian warriors** which would contribute to the consolidation of Ukrainian society, case-hardening the foundations of the contemporary Ukrainian political nation and strengthening the state's defense capability.

Besides, we should note inconsistency, inequality and injustice in their commemoration and burial. Memorial policies for veterans lead to competition, increased social tension, and increased tension even between the families of those killed in action.

Suggested Solution

Developing a unified comprehensive program of respecting, honoring and **reflecting/building** the image of veterans, which in the future will become the fundamental basis for the consolidation of the Ukrainian political nation.

We are going to develop an integrated approach that includes clear-cut, detailed and transparent criteria and procedures for expressing respect for active military personnel and veterans, and for perpetuating the memory and paying the veterans the last respects with appropriate honors. It is clear that the criteria are based on objective indicators, such as veteran status, awards, and so on. The basis of the state policy on the burial of military personnel and veterans has already been enshrined in such regulatory legal acts as the Law of Ukraine "On the Charter of the Garrison and

Guard Service of the Armed Forces of Ukraine” (Articles 81-84, Appendix 18), the Law of Ukraine “On Burial and Funeral Business” and others. An important element in developing and implementing this part of the policy on veterans and their families is to ensure that such an integrated approach is implemented equally for all veterans, regardless of their place of residence or social status.

It would be appropriate to develop and adopt at the legislative level the Law of Ukraine “On Commemorative Activities”, which will ensure the consistency and uniformity of the rules for perpetuating memory for all veterans, and also offer new (other than Soviet) approaches to honoring veterans' memory. Unfortunately, sometimes it is the Soviet heritage that does not allow Ukrainian society to leave in the past honoring expressed as setting up marble and granite monuments and accept modern, technological and semantic solutions.

We Should Consider the Following

Any form of perpetuating memory should be based on the Ukrainian historical context and with due account for the world's best practices. We consider it necessary to attract the expertise and resources of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory.

Also, in accordance with the suggested changes, local programs of expressing respect, honoring and glorifying should be developed at various levels – regional, community and even at the level of labor collectives.

The state policy on honoring the memory of deceased Ukrainian warriors and those killed in action has a huge impact on the development of civil identity and national consciousness, which in turn (in the nearest future, in 5-10 years) will positively contribute to the state's defense capability.

Identified Problem No. 10

After the death of veterans during and after their service, the administrative burden commonly falls on families who are already stressed out, need support and understanding.

Suggested Solution

Taking care of the families of fallen and deceased veterans means taking primary care of the warriors themselves.

We consider it necessary to conduct a detailed analysis of the administration of processes related to receiving state-guaranteed assistance to family members after the death of a veteran. Any bureaucratic processes should be digitized, because searching, copying and waiting in the queue for hours in the offices of government authorities just to submit paper copies of documents that the government already has in its registers is definitely not about support, honoring and respect.

Providers of any services should undergo appropriate training in ethical communication with families of fallen warriors and veterans. Families of fallen warriors and veterans definitely must not face aggression and negligence on the part of service providers while they mourn their loss.

Besides, it is important to develop a system of psychological support for family members of the fallen or deceased veterans at the community level. Existing models of population assistance centers (resilience centers, veterans centers, sometimes even Administrative Services Centers) should become platforms for providing appropriate services, venues where appropriate support groups will be developing.

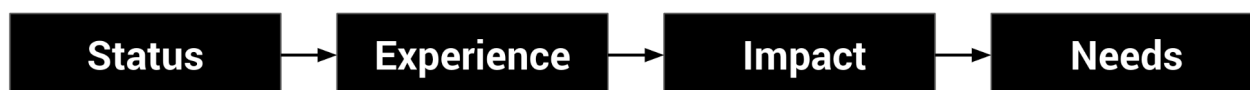
We Should Consider the Following

Supporting the families of warriors killed in action should not take place separately from the rest of the community, under any special conditions or in some special premises. However, it should be provided professionally, efficiently and with an understanding of the circumstances in which the persons receiving support find themselves. The main objective of such activities is to make a person return to a socially active life, strengthen the person's psychological state, show the purpose of life and opportunities for employment or development.

Focusing on a Person, not His or Her Status.

People are carriers of different life experiences. This experience, depending on its type, intensity, environment, and time, may have a different impact on their lives and well-being. Carriers of similar experiences suffer from the same impact, and, accordingly, they will have similar needs. Statuses are used to define different experiences of society. These are social markers by which we are able to determine that a person is a carrier of a particular experience.

A person, due to his or her experience, physical and social needs, may have several statuses at the same time. We suggest making a person's experience the main criterion for granting them a certain status. Definition of this experience allows to understand its impact on the well-being of status holders, and offer appropriate and decent support, which will be a logical consequence of this experience and its impact. Therefore, the principles of determining status should be clear-cut, fair, and reflect the essence of events in which a person took a direct part and the kind of experience he or she received.



There are statuses that are provided indefinitely – for life, and temporary statuses. Sometimes these statuses may not be related to each other.

Even today, persons with the status of a veteran continue to serve, which creates multiple statuses: a serviceman/servicewoman and a veteran. Servicing may also lead to the acquisition of the status of a missing person or prisoner, which in the future will affect his or her support and family support provided by the government.

In our activities, we quite often observe a situation where a person has simultaneously several statuses, for example, a serviceman/servicewoman and a veteran, a veteran and an internally displaced person, or a serviceman/servicewoman and a person with a disability, and so on. Such people need to keep the ability to enter the category of multiple statuses, depending on their needs, as each status has conditions under which it can be obtained, since it means different needs and the acquisition of such a status is caused by different events and different experiences. If a person with a disability, whose housing was destroyed in the temporarily occupied territory, joined the Armed Forces to defend the homeland, he or she must receive all the statuses guaranteed by the government: a veteran, an internally displaced person and a person with a disability.

Identified Problem No. 11

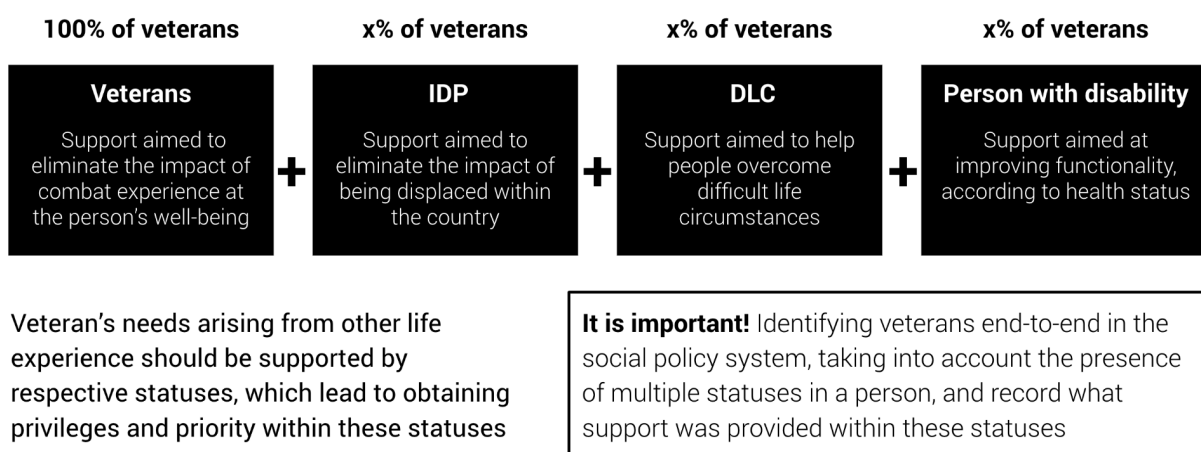
Not all the needs of veterans come from combat experience. Such needs are united by other social statuses. That is, one person can be represented in several statuses at once and be a beneficiary of different policies. All business processes in the social sector are organizationally and technically divided into several information systems. Frequently duplicating each other, they are based on outdated technologies (in particular, it is about hard-copy paperwork), as a result of which they are poorly controlled, create unjustified difficulties in obtaining various types of social support by citizens, and lead to irrational use of state funds, including their abuse.

1. The government does not have the capability to track a person's representation in several statuses.
2. The government is not always able to track a person's receipt of assistance by one of the statuses, which leads to duplication of efforts of the government authorities involved and inappropriate budgeting.

Suggested Solution

1. Developing the government's ability to identify a person end-to-end in accounting systems
2. Reviewing the content of social statuses based on the logic of belonging to experience in a comprehensive manner;
3. Determining the necessary prioritization and potential privileges for veterans and their families within all possible related statuses (temporary and lifetime);

Support Should Hinge on Experience



4. Introducing a system of accounting, data management, digital tools for end-to-end identification of statuses, person's needs, and co-directing the provision of various types of social services.

We Should Consider the Following

It is important to understand that the multiplicity of statuses does not mean granting a person an advantage over others. This primarily means taking into account all the criteria of social needs. Simultaneously with the statuses, a person should receive the full range of government support including financial payments and other benefits, while, in the event of duplication of benefits, such a person has the right to choose which benefit to use.

Prioritization and granting privileges to veterans, carriers of dual status within other social statuses, can be a tool of state policy, but it is necessary to approach its application with due responsibility, and openly communicate such a solution as part of the general state policy relating to veterans and their families.

It is important to remember that state policy should take into account the interests of all citizens and avoid discrimination against some groups over others.

The full-fledged launch of the Unified Social Information System (hereinafter referred to as the USIS) is a crucial reform for the social protection sector, which should also change opportunities for veterans. Only properly collected and updated information in the USIS can ensure effective management of processes related to the provision of social services or payments. The system should automate and centralize all business processes in the social sector and be integrated, in particular, with the information systems of the Ministry of Social Policy, the Pension Fund, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine (Diia Portal), the Tax Service of Ukraine, and so on.

Policy Beneficiaries

Identified Problem No. 12

The definition of a veteran and his or her family member is political and it is not based on the person's experience and needs, and the [law on war veterans](#) brings together different audiences in terms of experience and needs.

It is the law on war veterans that has incorporated a number of other audiences, with not all of them sharing with veterans the experience of participating in combat operations. That is, veterans in the context of Ukrainian legislation are not only those people who are directly related to the defense of their homeland or who served in law enforcement agencies, but the term “veteran” with appropriate prefixes is used in various legislative acts.

As of today, Ukrainian legislation defines that combat participants are persons who participated in the performance of combat missions to protect their homeland as part of military units, formations, associations of all types and branches of the Armed Forces of the active Armed Forces (Navy), in partisan detachments and the underground resistance movement and other Armed Forces units both in wartime and in peacetime. On the other hand, in the subsequent list of persons belonging to the combat participants, persons who did not take direct part in the performance of combat missions are also indicated – these are, for example, persons who during the World War II were part of units and divisions of the active Armed Forces and Navy as “sons of regiments” and cabin boys until they reached the age of majority, employees of the culture sector servicing fronts, and some others.

Participants in the war are also entitled to be granted a status of a veteran, which include, in particular, persons who during the World War II voluntarily provided material, financial or other assistance to military units, hospitals, partisan detachments, underground resistance groups, other units and individual military personnel in their struggle against the Nazi invaders, employees of the culture sector servicing fronts. Persons with war-related disabilities category also include persons who became persons with disabilities as a result of diseases related to the elimination of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, and those who became persons with disabilities as a result of injuries, maiming, concussion or other damages to health received during the Revolution of Dignity.

Suggested Solution

Identifying the beneficiaries, stakeholders, and target audience of the policy correctly. Reconsidering the logic of granting veteran status and ensuring that the interests of others audiences with different experiences are protected, too, those who are currently defined in [the Law of Ukraine “On the Status of War Veterans, and Guarantees of Their Social Protection”](#).

We Should Consider the Following

When developing and implementing policies for veterans and their families, we should realize that the government and communities are not only stakeholders in policies for veterans and their

families, but also ultimate beneficiaries. This means that the development of policies for veterans and their families should be based on the interests of veterans themselves, their family members and government interests, which should be protected in the implementation of this policy.

What Are the General Definitions of Veteran Experience?

Establishing a separate status for veterans in the legislation is determined by profound socio-cultural and legal aspects. This issue is not only relevant, but also important for the recognition, support and protection of individuals who have given years of their lives to servicing at the frontline and defending national interests.

Each state independently determines who will be granted the status of a veteran and develops a support package for these people that is logical from the point of view of its own social structure. There is no single correct approach, and therefore ready-made solutions that can be quickly replicated. This decision is influenced by a number of significant factors, in particular, the history of the state, the format of relations between the Armed Forces and civil society, the structure of the Armed Forces, and the social structure.¹⁰ This decision should be based on the historical, legislative and cultural aspects of the state and be logical.

In the Ukrainian political and legislative discourse, we often hear calls to imitate and compare the experience of other countries. But we urge not to copy the solutions of other states, but to analyze them to determine the status of a veteran in Ukraine as the basis for future policy on veterans and their families.

In particular, based on the long-term study of the other countries' expertise, consultations with developers of foreign policies and publications' analysis, we highlight the following options for determining the status of a veteran and give the benefits and drawbacks of each of the options for Ukraine.

Version 1 Veterans Are Those Who Served in the Armed Forces

The most inclusive and broad definition of a veteran includes all those who served in the Armed Forces for any period of time.¹¹ Such a policy primarily recognizes the intention and motivation of a person to serve in the Armed Forces and his or her admission to it.¹²

Benefits: Under this policy, even newly enlisted military personnel may potentially consider themselves part of a larger veteran community.¹³

Drawbacks: At the same time, calling veterans people who have not even had team training can devalue the contribution of other servicemen who have put more effort in the Armed Forces. Besides, granting veteran status to people who are dismissed without honors can undermine the value of that status.¹⁴

¹⁰ Military-veteran transition

¹¹ For example, in the United Kingdom, the length of service to qualify as a veteran is a single day.

¹² Military Veteran Reintegration, Castro, Dursun, page 6 (Tiia-Triin Truusa, Carl Andrew Castro)

¹³ Military Veteran Reintegration, Castro, Dursun, page 6 (Tiia-Triin Truusa, Carl Andrew Castro)

¹⁴ Military Veteran Reintegration, Castro, Dursun, page 7 (Tiia-Triin Truusa, Carl Andrew Castro)

Version 2 Veterans Are Those Who Served in the Armed Forces in a Certain Historical Period

For example, only participants in a particular war or conflict can be called veterans. If the military served during the specified time period, they would be considered veterans of that war. The Croatian definition is an example of this approach, as veterans are those who participated in the Croatian War of Independence in 1991-1995, members of the national liberation movement (i.e. partisans) in World War II, Members of the National Guard in World War II, and former military personnel who served after 1996. The Croatian definition also includes people who were not technically military personnel, but participated in armed confrontation as combat participants.¹⁵

Benefits: Creating a new status can really facilitate the distribution of preferential support, because there will be no need to change the current legislation and face restrictions that such a process provides for. Naturally, there should be initiatives to establish a sustainable policy system for veterans and their families. However, when analyzing the draft laws that were aimed at solving this issue, we could see the mistakes of that time politicians, namely: granting status not based on the experience gained, but on the time frame in which such experience was gained.

Drawbacks: However, this solution will only have a temporary effect and will not contribute to the development of a consistent, reasonable and systematic policy. It will create the effect of a prompt, but poorly elaborated decision, and hinder efforts to develop a consistent approach. In particular, the division by time of experience gained by military personnel can lead to an unfair comparison of the contribution of military personnel who defended their country in other historical periods: during the ATO, JFO and full-scale invasion of Russia, and have already received the status of participants in combat operations, participants in the war, persons with war-related disabilities, and war veterans. Serving in the ranks of the Security and Defense Forces, citizens carry out their duty and are not always free to choose their own future: today, those people serve in the Armed Forces who were under 18 during the ATO/SFO, and those for whom servicing during the full-scale invasion is not the first experience of defending their country. Moreover, new projects suggest to introduce a new status, but we should understand that the creation of a new status can really facilitate the distribution of preferential support, as there will be no need to change the current legislation and face restrictions that such a process provides for.

As of 2023, the absence of a holistic state policy on veterans affairs has led to inconsistent and often unfair treatment of military personnel and veterans who joined the service in different historical periods, and their family members. For example, families of the military who died before February 23, 2022 received significantly lower compensation from the government than the families of people who died on February 24, 2022 and later.¹⁶

"For a person who died on February 23, the family received UAH 1,800,000, and for a person who died on February 24, the family received UAH 15,000,000. It makes me feel uncomfortable, as it is really unfair. There is no difference between these people".

¹⁵ Military Veteran Reintegration, Castro, Dursun, page 7 (Tiia-Triin Truusa, Carl Andrew Castro)

¹⁶ "The Way of a Warrior's Dearest One", Veteran Hub, 2023

*Wife/husband/partner serves in the Armed Forces for the second time since 2014, journey 3.*¹⁷

This example highlights the importance of clear definition of statuses provided by the government, and careful and realistic planning of support programs.

*"It is these kinds of gaps in veterans' policy (especially before February 24) that make people compare "old" veterans with "new" veterans, "true" veterans with "untrue" ones, and so on, and this is very unfair. It is common knowledge that veterans of 2014–2022 and their families have many questions to the government and, by the way, there is no information or other policy regarding this issue. Everyone just keeps saying that the real war started on February 24, but what about hundreds of thousands of disappointed and despondent families? Simply put, those veterans and their families who were fighting from 2014 to 2021, but for certain reasons could not join the war starting from 2022, may feel that they have been betrayed," says Artem Osypian, serviceman and psychotherapist.*¹⁸

Version 3 Different Veteran Statuses for Different Branches of the Armed Forces

Let's take Estonia's policy, as an example of the distribution of different veteran statuses for different branches of the Armed Forces. The Estonian Defense Forces include reservist forces, conscription and voluntary service for the Defense League and reserve units. Estonia's definition of a veteran includes those who participated in the country's military defense as part of the Defense Forces, people who participated in international or collective defense operations, and those who acquired permanent disability while performing duties in the Defense Forces or as an active member of the Defense League.¹⁹ This definition follows the logic of the National Defense model and takes into account the contributions of conscripts, Defense League members, and reservists to national defense.²⁰

Benefits: this logic makes it possible to take into account the experience and its impact in more detail, depending on the conditions and environment of the service, and offer more customized support models.

Drawbacks: in the context of the full-scale Russian invasion and given that almost all departments of the security and defense sector are involved in defense, regardless of their original purpose, we consider this approach inappropriate for Ukraine.

¹⁷ "The Way of a Warrior's Dearest One", Veteran Hub, 2023

¹⁸ "The Way of a Warrior's Dearest One", Veteran Hub, 2023

¹⁹ Military Veteran Reintegration, Castro, Dursun, page 7 (Tiia-Triin Truusa, Carl Andrew Castro)

²⁰ Military Veteran Reintegration, Castro, Dursun, page 8 (Tiia-Triin Truusa, Carl Andrew Castro)

Version 4 Veterans Are Only Those Who Served in the Armed Forces in Combat Conditions

This definition is the least inclusive of all. For example, in the United States, this approach allows to call veterans only those who served in the Armed Forces in combat conditions, or even those who served in combat conditions for a certain time and only provided they were dismissed from military service with honors. This policy divides veterans into participants in combat operations and other military personnel.²¹

We are inclined to adapt this particular version, taking into account the circumstances described in this document, and at the same time we suggest to determine the status of a veteran in Ukraine in relation to experience, and not the time frame of its obtaining.

Benefits: The threat from the Russian Federation is due to geographical proximity, not just the historical period. Children who were under 18 at the beginning of the invasion in 2014 are now serving in the ranks of the Armed Forces and get killed for Ukrainian independence. We cannot predict the future, but we also cannot exclude the possibility that the Russo-Ukrainian War is the last armed confrontation of the independent Ukraine. Both to contain and possibly repel this threat, and to preserve the high potential of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, military service will continue its own strategic development in the future. Therefore, the status of a veteran in the future can serve a new generation of Ukrainian military personnel. The definition of a "war veteran" will affect not only those who were or are already defending the country, but also those who will defend it in future historical periods. It will make the military service appealing and give motivation to serve.

Various formats, conditions, and involvement during military service will have different effects on the quality of life in the future and potentially lead to different needs after completion of service. The experience of serving in peacetime and during war and other emergencies will also have a different impact on the well-being of veterans and their families. However, it is the experience of participating in combat operations that has the most lasting impact on the well-being of veterans and their families.

We think that the government should adequately recognize the experience of all military personnel, and we would also like to stress out that even in military service, a person's experience will vary, so we should consider maintaining different statuses for its designation.

Drawbacks: Other audiences that have played a very important role in defending the country will not be able to qualify for veteran status and will need some other legal definition.

²¹ Military Veteran Reintegration, Castro, Dursun, page 6 (Tiia-Triin Truusa, Carl Andrew Castro)

Modern Ukrainian Veterans – New Vision of Statuses

A veteran is primarily a social status that indicates experience related to military service and participation in combat operations. The modern definition of statuses means awareness and recognition of the role of every person who joined the Security and Defense Forces and defended our country. Given that the Russo-Ukrainian War has been going on for 10 years, the definition of a "veteran" refers to and will apply to a significant number of people, indicating their contribution and heroic deeds, and is also the basis for providing necessary and adequate support that takes into account the experience and needs of each category of veterans. Status determination directly affects both state social guarantees and how the society perceives and recognizes the combat experience and contribution of veterans.

Defence of the Motherland, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, respect for its State symbols shall be the duty of the citizens of Ukraine.

Citizens shall perform military service in accordance with law.

[\(Article 65 of the Constitution Of Ukraine\)](#)

In today's realities, any country needs a strong and professional Armed Forces. The Ukrainian experience from 2014 to the present day is an example of the development of a defense-capable Armed Forces, which consists of various categories including both professional military personnel, volunteers, mobilized warriors, and Foreign Legion fighters aged 18 to 60. The modern Ukrainian Armed Forces is a powerful force that continues to fight on its own territory with the aggressor, following orders that make them obtain a different experience, and therefore provide a different impact on their well-being in the future.

"I didn't choose where to go, it was the state to choose it", says Masi Nayyem, war veteran.

We are aware that the experience that military personnel gain in service and in combat operations has a lasting and significant impact on their well-being. Various formats, conditions, and involvement during military service will have different effects on the quality of life in the future and potentially lead to different needs after completion of service.

The experience of military service, its risks, and the impact on well-being after completion differ significantly in peacetime and emergency, martial law, and other states of critical threat to the interests of the country.

The word "veteran" in Latin means "experienced". In today's Ukrainian realities, both among the military and in society in general, those defenders who have gained combat experience since 2014 are considered the most experienced ones.

We identify two key differences in the experience of military service:

- direct participation in combat operations and performance of duties in the combat zone;
- military service without participation in combat operations.

It is combat experience that has the greatest physical, psychological, and emotional long-term impact on the military. Apart from the threat to their lives, grueling conditions and other challenges, they are to face a rather difficult journey of returning to civilian life, which requires recognition and support.

In our understanding, **combat experience** means direct participation in military operations, which according to the [Law of Ukraine "On Defence of Ukraine"](#) is defined as the form of using formations, military units, subunits (other forces and means) of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, other components of the Defense Forces, and the Special Operations Police Unit of the National Police of Ukraine to perform combat (special) missions in operations or independently during repulsing the armed aggression against Ukraine or the elimination (neutralization) of armed conflict, performing other missions with the use of any type of weapons.

Identified Problem No. 13

The impact of combat experience and performing missions in the war zone differs significantly from other military service experiences, even during the war.

Suggested Solution

Legislate the status as follows

Veteran is a person who took direct part in military operations to protect the homeland, including the territory of other states, if this is part of Ukraine's international obligations.

This means that a person who was involved in performing combat missions during combat operations and the threat of encroachment on the territorial integrity of the state is entitled to be granted the status of a veteran, regardless of the duration of service and other circumstances.

We Should Consider the Following

1. As representatives of civil society, we should stress out the importance of changing approaches and updating policies for veterans and their families, rather than assessing the military history or the heroic deeds of defenders. In Ukraine, there is a system of awards and distinctions that should be granted for special merits and feats. However, we consider it unacceptable to integrate the award system into the logic of policy on veterans and their families. Besides, the system of state awards also needs to be revised, with impartial factors minimized.
2. Veteran status refers to a person's past experience, which stays with the veterans for the rest of their life, regardless of further circumstances and actions. The grounds for deprivation of status may be false information provided for obtaining status and dismissal from service due to a criminal sentence for an offense committed during service.
3. When developing the legislative framework, it is important to work out in detail the definition of combat experience and the grounds for granting status. The status will be of value only if the

government ensures proper control over the accuracy of the information and materials that are the grounds for providing it.

According to this definition, such categories from the current status of a Participant in Combat Operations will be considered veterans, which are currently provided for in Article 6 of the Law of Ukraine “[On the Status of War Veterans, and Guarantees of Their Social Protection](#)”:

- **persons (including foreigners) who participated in the Anti-Terrorist Operation, Special Forces Operation, and in the implementation of measures necessary to ensure the defense of Ukraine, protection of the security of the population and the interests of the state in connection with the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine;**
- persons who, as part of the **volunteer units** that had been formed or self-organized to protect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, took a direct part in the anti-terrorist operation, being directly in the zones of the anti-terrorist operation during its implementation, provided that such volunteer units acted in cooperation or were subsequently included in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, the National Guard of Ukraine and other military units and law enforcement agencies established in accordance with the laws of Ukraine, or took a direct part in the implementation of measures to ensure national security and defense, repel and deter the armed aggression of the Russian Federation in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, and also in the implementation of measures necessary to ensure the defense of Ukraine, protect the security of the population and the interests of the state in connection with the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine;
- persons who took direct **part in military operations on the territory of other states** ([their list, periods of combat operations](#)) and categories of military personnel shall be approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, in particular military personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the Security Service of Ukraine, the Foreign Intelligence Service of Ukraine, police officers, ordinary, commanding personnel and military personnel of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, other military units established in accordance with the laws of Ukraine, which, by the decision of the relevant government authorities, were sent to participate in international peacekeeping and security operations or on a business trip to the states where military operations had been underway during this period;
- persons who took direct **part in the combat operations of the World War II**, namely, military personnel who served in military subunits, units, headquarters and institutions that were part of the active Armed Forces, partisans and underground fighters, members of people's militia units, employees of special units granted during the World War II the status of persons who were serving in the ranks of the Red Armed Forces and performed missions for the benefit of the Armed Forces and Navy within the rear borders of active fronts or operational zones of active fleets, and also persons who took direct part in combat operations against Nazi Germany and its allies during the World War II, including on the territory of other states as part of the World War II Allied Armies of the former USSR, partisan detachments, underground resistance groups and other anti-fascist formations;
- military personnel, as well as persons of commanding and enlisted personnel of the bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and bodies of the State Security Committee of the former USSR, who

during the World War II served in cities, participation in the defense of whom is calculated as the length of service for granting pension payments on preferential terms established for military personnel of units of the active Armed Forces;

- persons who took direct **part in combat operations during the fighting for independence of Ukraine in the 20th century** – persons who participated in all forms of armed struggle for the independence of Ukraine in the 20th century as part of the Ukrainian Insurgent Armed Forces, the Poliska Sich Ukrainian Insurgent Armed Forces headed by Otaman Taras Borovets (Bulba), the Ukrainian People's Revolutionary Armed Forces (UPRA), the Karpatska Sich People's Defense Organization, the Ukrainian Military Organization (UMO), armed units of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and in accordance with the [Law Of Ukraine](#) "On the Legal Status and Commemoration of Fighters for the Independence of Ukraine in the 20th Century" recognized as Fighters for the Independence of Ukraine in the 20th century;
- persons who were provided with a **status of a veteran with a disability** and who, after another examination by the medical and social expert commission, were not found to have a disability. Such persons are exempt from the need to undergo another status registration procedure. The status of a participant in combat operations is granted to replace the status of a veteran with a disability.
** this provision may lose its relevance if the general logic of the status of a person with a disability caused by the war changes.*
- those liable for military service who had been called up to military training camps and sent to **Afghanistan during the period of combat operations taking place**; the military of the flight personnel who flew to perform combat missions to Afghanistan from the territory of the former USSR; military personnel and persons who were enlisted in the local air defense units of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the former USSR and took a direct part in repelling enemy raids, eliminating the consequences of bombing and artillery attacks carried out by specially established units;
- **persons involved in confidential cooperation who participated in the performance of the missions assigned by the resistance movement in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine**, in the area of the anti-terrorist operation, the area of implementation of measures to ensure national security and defense, repel and deter armed aggression, or in other territories where military (combat) operations were conducted during the performance of these missions;

Multiple Statuses

Following the logic of the modern social policy of the government in relation to all citizens and the presence of more than one social status in a person, we suggest to apply the logic of a possible multiplicity of statuses for veterans, because a veteran can be simultaneously a person with a disability, an internally displaced person, an unemployed person, and so on.

We suggest to make the status of a veteran lifelong and widely inclusive, that is, available in full to everyone who meets the criteria to obtain it. We also suggest to outline the support it provides, based on the logic of the impact of combat experience on human well-being.

In this regard, it is important to make sure that veterans with double or more statuses are protected by the government, and their needs are met within the limits of statuses that correspond to a particular experience. For this purpose, the Ministry of Veterans Affairs should coordinate the introduction of state policies and advocate for prioritizing the needs of veterans and their families across the state.

Stressing out the fact that veterans with disabilities require personalized attention and a detailed study of their needs and experience in reintegration, rehabilitation, accessibility of the environment and many other areas of life, at the same time, we do not see the need to introduce a separate veteran status “a person with war-related disabilities”, because first of all, this is a veteran who has been diagnosed with a disability. Being granted these two statuses, a person should receive decent support from the government and society.

So, the loss of health by a person who will have the status of a person with a war-related disability will be taken into account. The circumstances of obtaining a disability (due to the war) will also be taken into account.

The procedure for establishing disability is a well-regulated process, which, in addition, is now being improved. In the case when the general state of health of a veteran during participation in combat operations or during military service has deteriorated so much that he or she needs to have a disability established, such a procedure should be focused on these specific features and take into account whether the person has the status of a veteran.

Besides, under the current legislation, veterans who have received injuries and a war-related disability are entitled to only one status – a person with a war-related disability and do not have the right to retain the status of a Participant in Combat Operations. This status will be retained only after the restoration of health and elimination of a disability status.

Identified Problem No. 14

The status of a veteran is a lifetime status. However, under the current legislation, veterans who have received war-related injuries and disabilities have the right only to **one** status – a person with a war-related disability and **they do not have** rights to retain their status of a Participant in Combat Operations.

Suggested Solution

Following the logic of the right of a person to have more than one social status, we suggest to abandon the status of a person with a war-related disability, providing for the proper prioritization and privileges for veterans who have two statuses in the legislation regarding persons with disabilities.

Providing the “veteran” status and certificate, and separate documents confirming disability.

Benefits:

1. This approach will make it possible not to separate from other veterans, those who have suffered a significant impact on their health as a result of military operations.
2. Reducing stigma.

We Should Consider the Following

It is important that the regulatory framework provides the possibility to establish the circumstances that led to disability and link them to military operations, to ensure further prioritization and possible privilege of services within the status of a person with a disability.

It is also important to take into account the further scenario regarding the health status of veterans with two statuses as part of the comprehensive reforming of the Disability Evaluation Board, because the health of veterans may undergo changes even after the end of service. This may happen due to various circumstances, not all of which are related to the impact of the service. However, it is important to track in which cases the deterioration of health will occur precisely as a result of service and combat experience, regardless of the statute of limitations for such experience.

Veteran's Family

It should be noted that apart from veterans, their families also gain significant experience during the war.²² While the military personnel do their service, their families suffer from a significant impact that can persist in their lives in the future. Families of warriors and veterans assume responsibility for the civilian well-being of military personnel in service, experience stress and anxiety due to possible risks to the life and health of their loved ones during their participation in combat operations, and provide services that the government cannot cover to the full extent. In some cases, veterans may need extra care and support from their families. Even after the service is completed, families face new challenges and need support to restore their own well-being. These challenges should be taken into account and considered in the process of developing social programs for veterans.

Identified Problem No. 15

Veterans' families are not perceived by the government as actors and beneficiaries of the policy. Instead, the government's actions towards them usually classify families solely as those who care about the well-being of veterans, and do not take into account the impact of experience on their own well-being. They are insufficiently reflected in the current government approach, with their experience still poorly understood, and the government support not meeting their actual needs.²³ This is due, in particular, to a poorly elaborated regulatory framework, a low level of prioritization of family needs within the framework of state policy, and the absence of end-to-end identification of families in state systems.

Suggested Solution

²² "The journey of a Warrior's Dearest One", Veteran Hub, 2023

²³ "The journey of a Warrior's Dearest One", Veteran Hub, 2023

Identifying the family as the actor and beneficiary of state policy with proper reflection at the level of identification, study of needs and provision of government support.

Identifying veteran's family members is important for recognizing their contributions and experience, and protecting their rights. Therefore, we suggest introducing end-to-end identification of veterans' families in state policy, gaining insight into the experience of veterans' families through the collection and analysis of data on their experience and needs, and developing a proper legislative framework reflecting their concerns, to provide them with decent support and recognition.

This may be achieved by:

1. Including family members in the Unified Register of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs with further integration into other digital state systems **without** introduction of a separate social status, subject to the state's commitment to end-to-end prioritization of veterans' families within the framework of the policy on veterans and their families.
and/or
2. Introducing the social status of a veterans' family member with further targeted development of the regulatory framework.

We Should Consider the Following

At the same time, families also act as stakeholders of the policy, and take on a wide variety of administrative and other functions of the state, in particular, in the events of injuries, missing status, captivity or death of a veteran. Families also play a significant role in returning veterans back to normal life and often act as "guides" in civilian life.²⁴ These roles require further studying and legitimization. In particular, with high-quality awareness raising and involvement, families can become significant players in the successful implementation of the policy on veterans and their families.

Creating a new status is a complex bureaucratic process that, in our opinion, is not necessary to meet the needs of veterans' families **subject to proper prioritization** of their interests at the level of state policy, their end-to-end identification in state systems, collection and analysis of data about them and their needs.

Veterans' family members who can benefit from government support include:

- parents, if they were not deprived of parental rights in relation to the veteran;
- a spouse;
- children under the age of majority;
- adult children under 23, provided that they study full-time;
- dependents.

Families of Fallen (Deceased) Veterans

The family members of the fallen (deceased) veterans listed in this article include:

- parents, if they were not deprived of parental rights;

²⁴ "The journey of a Warrior's Loved One" (Veteran Hub, 2023), From Getting Injured to Returning Home (Pryncyp, Veteran Hub, 2023)

- a spouse who has not remarried, regardless of whether he or she is paid a pension or not;
- adult children under 23, provided that they study full-time;
- children whose both parents are dead or missing;
- dependents of the fallen (deceased) veteran, who have the pension paid.
- families of persons specified in the articles regarding those who are entitled to receive the status of a veteran, who died in action (went missing) or died as a result of injury, concussion or maiming acquired during the defense of homeland or performing other military service duties (official duties), and as a result of illness related to being at the front or acquired during military service (including on the territory of other states) during military operations and conflicts;

The procedure for granting and revoking the status of a family member of a fallen (deceased) war veteran shall be determined by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

Identified Problem No. 16

Families of fallen (deceased) veterans are divided by two different statuses:

- 1) family members of fallen (deceased) veterans
- 2) family members of fallen (deceased) defenders

Suggested Solution

By analogy with the proposed logic with the status of a veteran, we suggest to distinguish one status of family members of fallen (deceased) veterans with the possibility of having related statuses.

We Should Consider the Following

We consider this division a clear evidence of the consequences of poorly developed state policy and the harmful nature of applying the approach of determining status based on historical period, rather than experience. This has led to the formation of inequality between those who have related experience and is perceived by society and families as comparing the value of life of warriors and their families with others.

Identified Problem No. 17

Families of fallen (deceased) veterans do not receive proper support from the government. They are experiencing a great loss after the death of warriors and veterans. The loss of a father, mother, husband or wife, son or daughter is usually extremely difficult for a family to cope with. However, it is the families of the fallen warriors who face significant administrative and bureaucratic burden when obtaining all the documents related to the death of a veteran.

Suggested Solution

Developing a support route for the veteran's family from the moment of death notification and throughout life. This route should take into account the needs of families and identify them as key actors and beneficiaries of state processes, thus minimizing bureaucratic and administrative

pressure, and providing appropriate support programs and a comprehensive commemoration program.

We Should Consider the Following

Taking care of the families of the fallen (deceased) veterans, we, as a society and a state, pay tribute to the contribution and heroic deeds of Ukrainian heroes. Family members of a fallen (deceased) veteran should also be included in the state policy. Psychological support is most important to help family members cope with grief, stress, and emotional challenges. Families of fallen veterans may require medical and social assistance to improve their well-being.

The community and government should understand that the support of family members of a fallen veteran is essential for their physical and psychological well-being. Commemorating a military is not only a way to honor his or her service, but also an opportunity for the family to keep in touch with the deceased and continue to live in line with his or her values and ideals. This approach helps to keep the unity and memory of a veteran in his or her family and society as a whole.

Identified Problem No. 18

The current definition of families has significant exceptions that need to be taken into account in policy and enshrined accordingly in legislation. In particular, we are talking about the children of veterans who were born after the death of their father.

Suggested Solution

Developing legislative regulation to set forth in the state policy children born after the death of their father, who was a soldier and/or a veteran.

We Should Consider the Following

Currently, the status of these children is not regulated by law – they do not have the right to either recognition or financial support from the government (benefits for a child of the deceased, one-time financial aid, pension in case of loss of the family provider). In fact, a child is born without a father who gave his life for the homeland that does not recognize his contribution to the struggle for sovereignty.

Recognizing and Highlighting the Unique Experiences of Other People

Military Service without Combat Experience

Identified Problem No. 19

Naturally, not all military personnel were directly involved in combat operations, but most of them were assigned the most important functions that affected the country's defense capability as a whole. We believe that military service, regardless of its format, should be highly valued and

respected in society, and all military personnel should receive decent support after being dismissed from service in order to restore their civilian life. However, we think that military service, even in an emergency situation and martial law, without combat experience will have different consequences for the well-being of the military.

We call for recognition of everyone's contribution and role in the victory, but we should emphasize that it is important to apply a clear-cut distinction – the experience of participating in combat operations is the basis for being considered a veteran, and the experience of military service outside the war zone is to be determined by other guarantees.

Suggested Solution

Recognizing the experience of military personnel who served during the war, study it and develop a policy towards them according to a logic similar to that we have suggested in this document, legislate the recognition of the experience of those military personnel who served during the state of emergency and martial law, but did not gain combat experience during service, suggest the drafting of individual laws that will provide them with government support in accordance with the experience gained.

We Should Consider the Following

In order to take into account all military personnel serving during the war, we suggest, in particular, to consider the possibility of counting the time of service during martial law according to preferential length of service as one of the options for resolving social protection issues. We also suggest to include in the list of this category conscripts who served during martial law and did not have the opportunity to leave due to the end of the established terms of military service.

Civilians who contributed to the combat operations ("participants in the war")

Identified Problem No. 20

The current legislation stipulates that quite a large number of civilian employees who, due to the performance of their official, professional, and labor duties, contributed to ensuring state sovereignty in different historical periods, are entitled to receive the status of a Participant in the War. Participants in the War include [13 categories of persons](#). Only one of them provides for direct participation in military operations – these are employees of enterprises, institutions, organizations that were involved and took a direct part in ensuring the conduct of the ATO/SFO. All other categories include, in particular, persons who provided voluntary financial or material assistance to the Armed Forces, military hospitals, etc., home front workers, military personnel who served during the World War II or studied during this period in military academies, schools or took courses, employees who were sent on a contractual basis to work in the states where military operations had been conducted, and so on.

Suggested Solution

Today, we may observe various circumstances that are not always associated with participation in combat operations, but which also affect the development of statehood and support for Ukraine.

It is important to highlight the contribution of such people and understand that in the event of possible disasters, people who risk their lives for the sake of the country can count on individual support. Below we will present our detailed vision regarding such categories of citizens:

- People affected by the combat operations;
- Affected participants of the Revolution of Dignity;
- Participants in the Chernobyl accident consequences elimination.

We Should Consider the Following

It is important to highlight the issue of recognizing the experience of civilians who had been involved and took a direct part in ensuring the conduct of the ATO/JFO and during the full-scale invasion, persons who had been engaged by mine action operators, eliminated accidents of various types in conditions of combat operations and increased danger, and so on. We should emphasize that the contribution or consequences of war for civilians should also be recognized by the state, but their statuses should convey the content of their experience, and their needs should also be studied and not identified with the needs of veterans.

People Affected by the Combat Operations

Today, the right to the status of a war veteran, in particular, the status of a person with a war-related disability, is granted to civilians who have acquired a disability from explosives, ammunition or military weapons both during the war and in the post-war period. These are people definitely affected by the war who need government support. However, they were not combat participants and they did not take part in the defense of their homeland.

Treating them as war veterans is incorrect, and it devalues the contribution of veterans. That is why the status and support of people affected by war should be determined by a separate state policy and legislation.

Affected Participants of the Revolution of Dignity

Ukraine has its own heroes and veterans who had taken part in the events that defined the country's further history. However, it is important to distinguish between the categories of these heroes. The difference between them is determined not only by the specific events in which they participated, but also by the nature of their contribution and the conditions in which this contribution was made. Modern public discourse attempts to equate participants in the Revolution of Dignity with participants in combat operations, but such a comparison may be unfair and incorrect.

War and Revolution are events different in nature. Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine began on February 20, 2014 with a military operation launched by the Russian armed forces to seize part of the territory of Ukraine – the Crimean Peninsula. The state of Ukraine should be consistent in its positions both at the international level, including in international courts initiating proceedings against the Russian Federation, and in the national legislation on determining events and their impact on society.

Undoubtedly, the Revolution of Dignity was a turning point in the history of independent Ukraine. Its importance, as well as the contribution of the participants of the Revolution, should be recognized at the state level, including identifying the injured participants, families of the victims of the Heavenly Hundred and providing them with decent support from the state and society.

Participants in the Chernobyl Accident's Consequences Elimination.

A similar situation occurs in relation to persons who have become persons with disabilities as a result of diseases related to the elimination of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. It is important to understand and recognize the contribution of the liquidators of the 1986 disaster, which is invaluable, especially when it leads to loss of health and affects the subsequent quality of life.

However, the consequences of official negligence or man-made disasters do not correspond to the conditions of war and also have a completely different nature, the experience of people and consequences they suffer from.

Liquidators and people affected by the Chernobyl disaster should have all the needs caused by the tragedy met, and have the right to government support, but having a causal relationship "due to war" is incorrect, given that the conditions for acquiring damage to health are different.

The statuses and social protection of citizens affected by the Chernobyl disaster are regulated by a separate [Law of Ukraine](#), accordingly, the statuses and social protection of people who took part in the elimination of the consequences of the disaster and who were found to have a disability should be properly regulated by the relevant legislation. Now they are "persons with war-related disabilities."

Table of Suggested Changes to Statutes

Veteran under the current law	Explanation in the new suggested framework	Status name in the suggested framework
Beneficiaries of the state policy on veterans and their families		
Participant in Combat Operations	Identical to the status of a veteran	Veteran <i>Related statuses:</i> - a person with a disability - internally displaced person - prisoner of war - unemployed - other social statuses
—	Veterans' families are not sufficiently taken into account in the current government approach, with their experience remaining poorly understood, and government support not meeting their actual needs	Veteran's family members <i>Related statuses:</i> - family member of a prisoner of war - family member of a missing person - internally displaced persons - permanent care providers - other social statuses
Family members of	By analogy with the suggested logic with the status	Family members of the

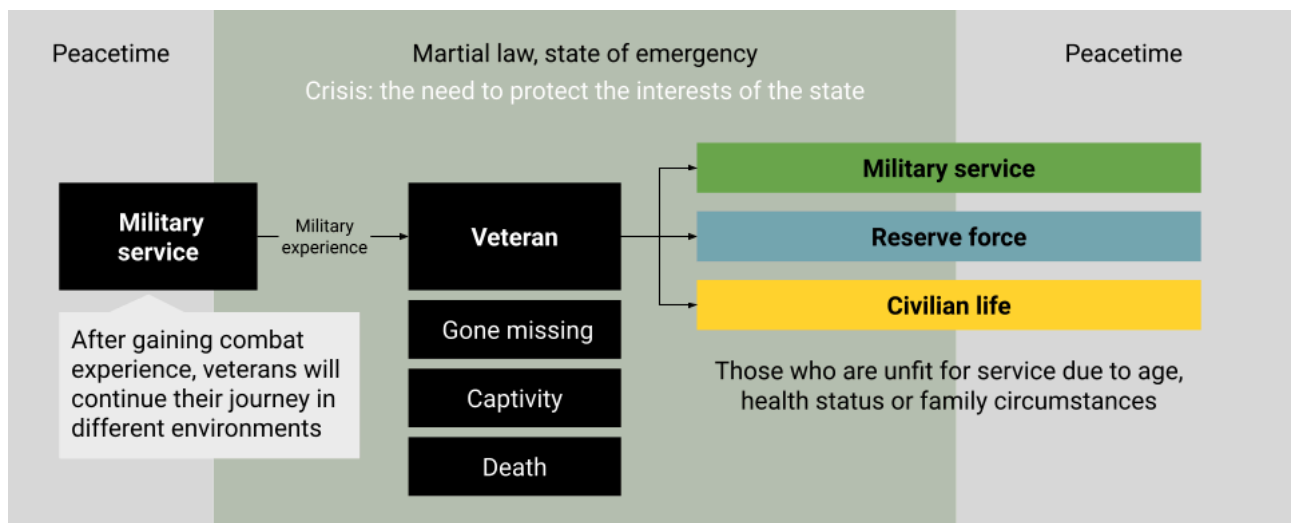
fallen (deceased) veterans	of a veteran, we suggest to distinguish one status of family members of fallen (deceased) veterans with the possibility of having related statuses.	fallen (deceased) veterans
Family members of the fallen (deceased) defenders		Family members of the fallen (deceased) veterans
A person with a war-related disability	If a veteran is found to have a disability, he or she will carry a dual status.	Veteran (his or her enhanced support as a person with a disability will be reflected in the related status)
Beneficiaries of other state policies		
Participants in the war	Since most of the categories that are eligible for the status of a participant in the war are civilian, we suggest reviewing and upgrading the need to identify certain categories of civilian people who contributed to the conduct of combat operations or were affected by them. Their statuses and support should be regulated by separate laws.	Persons who contributed to the conduct of combat operations Persons affected by the combat operations
Veterans of military service	Legislate recognition of the experience of those military personnel who had served in the state of emergency and martial law, but did not gain combat experience during their service. Improvement of legislation that will provide for their government support in accordance with the experience gained. In particular, within the framework of the Law of Ukraine "On the Status of Military Service Veterans..." , but with due account for the experience of service during mobilization and a shorter period of service (now it is 20 years).	Veterans of military service
Affected participants of the Revolution of Dignity Persons with war-related disabilities (participants of the Revolution of Dignity who were found to have a disability) Family members of fallen (deceased) veterans (family members of the Heavenly Hundred)	The importance of the Revolution of Dignity should be recognized by a separate law, which will also regulate the status of participants injured during the Revolution of Dignity, who were found to have a disability or without it, family members of the Heavenly Hundred, as well as guarantees of their social protection.	Affected participants of the Revolution of Dignity with a disability Affected participants of the Revolution of Dignity Family members of the fallen (deceased) participants of the Revolution of Dignity
Persons with war-related disabilities (who participated in the elimination of the	The statuses and social protection of citizens affected by the Chernobyl disaster are regulated by a separate Law of Ukraine . Accordingly, the statuses and social protection of people who took part in the elimination of the consequences of the	Persons with disabilities caused by the liquidation of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster

consequences of the Chernobyl disaster)	disaster and who were found to have a disability should be properly regulated by the relevant legislation.	
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Policy Environment for Veterans and Their Families

Among the generation of ATO/SFO veterans, up to 30% of them continued to serve in the Security and Defense Forces for three or more years after demobilization.²⁵ Most of the ATO/SFO veterans formed the basis of the active and standby reserve. It was these people who had been among the first to defend Ukraine after the full-scale invasion of Russia. Only a small proportion of veterans were able to develop their own civilian life after service – those who were unfit to do military service once again due to age, family circumstances or health conditions.

Therefore, we identify three key policy environments for veterans and their families:



Returning back to normal life takes time, and war and combat experience have a significant impact on the well-being of veterans and their families. During the service, the entire well-being of warriors and their families undergoes changes.²⁶ In the Ukrainian reality of the last ten years, military service takes place during the war, which increases the impact of military service through combat operations, and also has its own impact on the well-being of citizens. Military personnel and their families, like all citizens, take care of the safety of their families, have their nearest and dearest evacuated, look for new regions, lose their jobs and savings. During service, the military do not have enough opportunities to recover lost civilian capital, and the decline in civilian well-being significantly affects their experience of returning back to normal life.

Although the stages of a veteran's journey would be similar for all three groups of veterans, depending on their future living environment, the ability to meet needs, priorities, and goals of state policy differed. However, this was not communicated by the government and led to the fact that not all veterans clearly understood the prospects for their own future, and some of them assumed erroneous and sometimes harmful planning of their own lives in the period between mobilizations. The current interpretation of the government approach has created a misconception about veterans as people who have completed their service and need government support and services for the sustainable restoration of their civilian life that they will be able to develop in the future. In simple

²⁵ Veteran Reintegration Survey (IREX, Veteran Reintegration Program, 2020)

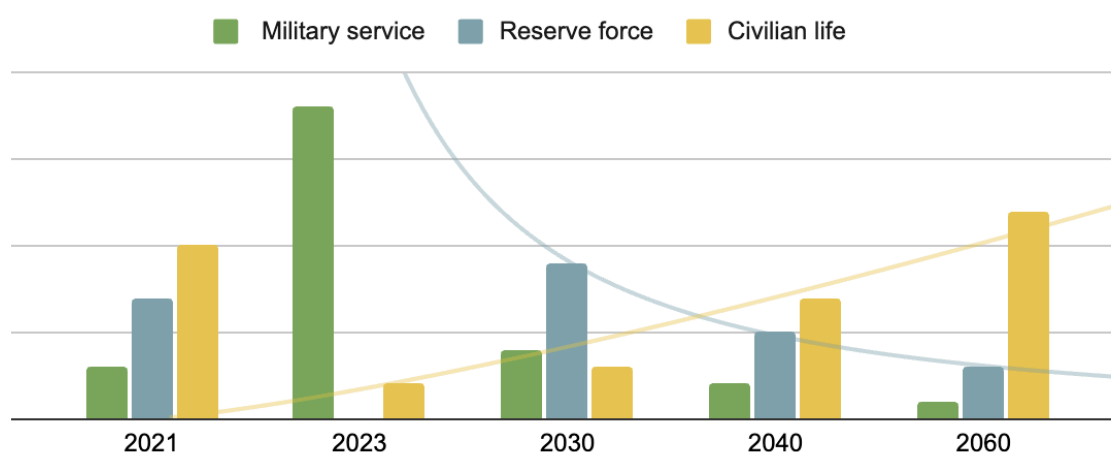
²⁶ The Veterans journey (Veteran Hub, IREX, Veterans Reintegration Program, 2023)

terms, the state policy in public communication equated the opportunities of all veterans, regardless of the real prospect of doing another military service for each of them.

Among ATO/SFO veterans, the transition period and subsequent rooting in civilian life during the war took at least three years under the most favorable circumstances (available support, mild challenges to the health and well-being of a veteran, etc.), but usually lasted 5-7 or more years after the end of service.²⁷ This means that a significant proportion of veterans from the operational reserve returned to do their military service under mobilization during the full-scale invasion almost immediately after their civilian life became comfortable again. During the period of one more military service, they have lost their best practices again and they will have to go through the journey of a veteran anew.

The reality of security threats to Ukraine, the demographics of the population, and the state of the security and defense sector allow us to make a confident assumption that the journey of the modern generation of Ukrainian veterans will differ. Carriers of combat experience are the most experienced warriors and one of the most important resources of Ukraine's defense capability. The competencies, experience and knowledge of veterans will become the property of the security sector, and therefore we believe that the Security and Defense Forces will make efforts to keep veterans in military service and in the operational reserve. Although we, the authors of this text, do not have access to the details of the state's defense and security strategy, it is logical to assume that veterans will be valuable specialists within its borders.

We expect that a significant proportion of veterans in the next decade and in the future will continue on their journey primarily in the first two environments: military service and reserve force, and only a small number of veterans will permanently return to civilian life after injuries, dismissal due to age or family circumstances.



The forecast chart is developed on the basis of publicly available data and the assumption that according to the current legislation, a significant proportion of military personnel involved in countering the armed aggression of the Russian Federation will form the basis of the reserve force of Security and Defense Forces after the end of the war and demobilization. The proportion of veterans who return to civilian life for good and will no longer be involved in the service will increase gradually and over time.

²⁷ The Veterans journey (Veteran Hub, IREX, Veterans Reintegration Program, 2023)

The needs of veterans will be similar in all policy environments, but the purpose of the state policy and the support tools will differ.

Environment 1 Military service – policy on veterans in the military service environment:

Key stakeholders: Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Veterans Affairs, Security Service of Ukraine, other institutions of the security and defense sector

The goal of the state policy is to support the country's defense capability, retaining the experience and competencies of veterans in the service after the mobilization period.

During the full-scale invasion, the Ukrainian Armed Forces attracted an unprecedented number of military personnel under mobilization. As during the ATO/JFO, these military personnel make up the main share of combat experience carriers. Some veterans will continue their military service during the state of emergency or martial law and after its end. As of 2020, according to research conducted among ATO/SFO veterans, up to 30% veterans continued their military service.²⁸ If this trend repeats after demobilization, a significant proportion of veterans will continue on their journey in the military service environment. This means that the stages of the veteran's journey will take place in the jurisdiction of the Security and Defense departments. Until recently, the personnel approach of security agencies was aimed at prioritizing regular military personnel and contract servicemen and did not have sufficient funds to keep conscripted military personnel in military service beyond the mobilization period. In particular, after the end of the active phase of military operations during the ATO/SFO, veterans testified to disillusionment with the Armed Forces and the outflow of personnel with combat experience due to bureaucratic obstacles.

In order to keep veterans in military service beyond the period of mobilization, the Security and Defense Forces must develop policies for veterans and their families, distinguish veterans as a separate audience when recruiting troops, and introduce the necessary updates and amendments to the regulatory framework, strategies and plans, and the military infrastructure that does not currently take into account the needs of veterans.

For example, although in recent years there have been significant amendments introduced to the regulatory framework, which, in particular, have expanded the participation of women in defense activities and provided access to military service for people with disabilities, it seems that these amendments have not led to a systematic review of the policies of the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the General Staff and the Armed Forces, because they have not been accompanied by a detailed study of the needs and experience of these audiences, and the development of necessary changes to make their military service possible. According to the authors, such changes should affect, in particular, but not exclusively:

- staffing and provision of healthcare infrastructure: providing the necessary specialists and equipment, treatment protocols for common conditions, and raising awareness of doctors and patients;

²⁸ Veteran Reintegration Survey (IREX, Veteran Reintegration Program, 2020)

- personnel policy: taking into account the specific features of management, training of team and management personnel, prevention of discrimination and violence in the team;
- provision: procurement of appropriate uniforms, equipment, and so on.

Environment 2 Reserve force – policy on veterans in the military reserve environment

Key stakeholders: Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Veterans Affairs, Security Service of Ukraine, other institutions of the Security and Defense sector, Ministry of Health of Ukraine, Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, Ministry of Economy of Ukraine, Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine

The goal of state policy: Maintaining the reserve force's combat readiness and restoring human capital asset.

After the end of the term of mobilization and war, veterans who choose not to continue serving in the Armed Forces and who have no grounds for termination of service (reaching the age limit, family circumstances, becoming unfit for service for health reasons) will be listed as the reserve force. Ukrainian legislation specifies general mobilization reserve, an active reserve and standby reserve. Before the full-scale Russian invasion on February 24, 2022, ATO/SFO veterans were the basis of active and standby reserves. It was these experienced warriors who promptly got into positions under the combat order, becoming the foundation of Ukraine's armed resistance. Today, many more members of the Defense Forces have become combat experience carriers. This means that we are talking about a potential operational active and standby reserve force including more than a million people. The degree of the country's defense capability directly hinges on the effectiveness of the state's rehabilitation and reintegration policies.

These people will be caught between two worlds for quite a long time: military and civilian one, and will have a shorter planning horizon in civilian life, which will create inequality in the opportunities for high-quality and sustainable integration into the civilian environment for veterans and their families while serving in the reserve force. However, according to research, the military of the operational reserve remained highly motivated to defend their country and got independently prepared for doing military service once again before the start of the full-scale invasion.²⁹

The presence of high-quality reserve forces, their readiness and cohesion may become the key to the country's defense capability. Consequently, the Security and Defense Forces are becoming a key stakeholder to support the high level of well-being of the reserve military. However, the experience of 2015-2022 shows that insufficient elaboration of the logic and regulatory framework regarding the reserve force affects the life and well-being of veterans, their readiness for service and competences.

We also believe that it is important to identify at least two audiences from the reserve force, whose experience will differ significantly in the next decade:

1. ATO/SFO veterans, for whom service under mobilization during the full-scale invasion is an experience of re-mobilization.

²⁹ The Veterans journey (Veteran Hub, IREX, Veterans Reintegration Program, 2023)

2. Veterans for whom the military service under mobilization during the full-scale invasion is their first experience.

We assume that the level of civilian well-being of these two groups will differ, and the well-being of ATO/SFO veterans may be lower at the beginning of the veteran's journey than the well-being of veterans who have been mobilized for the first time.

Understanding the future prospects, the possibility of re-mobilization before reaching the age limit, the conditions and benefits of the military service in the reserve force will be important for veterans.

We believe that when developing an updated vision of security and defense strategies, and planning the composition of the reserve force as a component of Ukraine's defense capability, the government should take into account past experience and thus develop a policy on veterans and their families in the reserve environment, and also a regulatory framework that will take into account the challenges that veterans and their families will face after demobilization, with the government's priorities in this environment.

Environment 3 Civilian life – policy on veterans in a civilian life environment

Key stakeholders: Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine, Ministry of Health of Ukraine, Ministry of Economy of Ukraine, Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, Ministry for Restoration of Ukraine, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine

The goal of the state policy: Restoring human capital asset, reducing the consequences of the demographic crisis

One of the consequences of Russia's aggression is the catastrophic aggravation of the demographic crisis in Ukraine. The rate of depopulation of the Ukrainians is one of the most threatening in the world - from 52 million people in 1991, to 32 million in 2023. Depopulation had intensified long before the enemy's armed aggression in 2014 and was the result of a hybrid war on the part of Russia, which was accompanied by proactive anti-Ukrainian propaganda along with the destabilization of the socio-economic situation in Ukraine. A significant part of the Ukrainian labor resources were attracted to the aggressor country even before the start of open aggression.

Today, problems with the loss of human capital have ceased to be exclusively a socio-economic problem and have entered the category of national security and defense capability of the country. And if Ukrainian society confidently speaks about the restoration of the country within the borders of 1991, then this may look realistic. However, unfortunately, no one will be able to offer a realistic agenda when we talk about the restoration of human capital, which has been relevant since 1991.

Threats related to the loss of human capital affect the rate of probable economic recovery and growth. The availability of high-quality labor resources was one of the biggest advantages of Ukraine in the minds of foreign investors. Today, the lack of millions of in-demand specialists creates serious problems even in the context of infrastructure restoration.

Moreover, analyzing the age structure of the population and comparing it with current demographic trends, we can talk about the really threatening prospect of dramatic “aging” of the Ukrainian population and an increase in the social burden on employed citizens.

Only a small proportion of veterans will start their civilian life being certain that they will never return to military service in their lifetime. These are primarily veterans who have reached the age limit and are unfit for health reasons, or for family reasons (this may be a temporary factor).

The essence of state policies for veterans and their families in terms of preserving and strengthening human capital, in the context of interaction with veterans, should be focused on the effective and dynamic return of this category to active economic and social life in Ukraine.

For this purpose, it is necessary not only to develop incentive programs for education, retraining, employment and development of veteran entrepreneurship. We are talking about the need to change the behavioral consciousness of the veteran audience, transforming and upgrading educational, cultural and other policies in interaction with veterans.

Returning to civilian life, veterans become users of all the systems and services available in the state, business, and community, and share most of the needs with each of the civilians. Working with well-being needs, which are more common among veterans, lies primarily in the additional competencies of existing specialists, and not in new unique services. When they return home, they will rely on their own knowledge to meet their needs, so they are most likely to apply for services where it was convenient for them before the military service.

Given the significant audience of veterans, all professionals with whom they will naturally interact along their journey should have appropriate competence and improve their ability to provide quality services to veterans and their families.

In the face of a demographic crisis and significant economic challenges, we do not consider it realistic and appropriate to replicate or emulate existing models of veterans affairs systems in other countries. But it is important to develop solutions that are qualitatively integrated into the Ukrainian legislative framework and the existing system of services rendered for citizens.

Policy That Understands the Needs of Veterans and Their Families

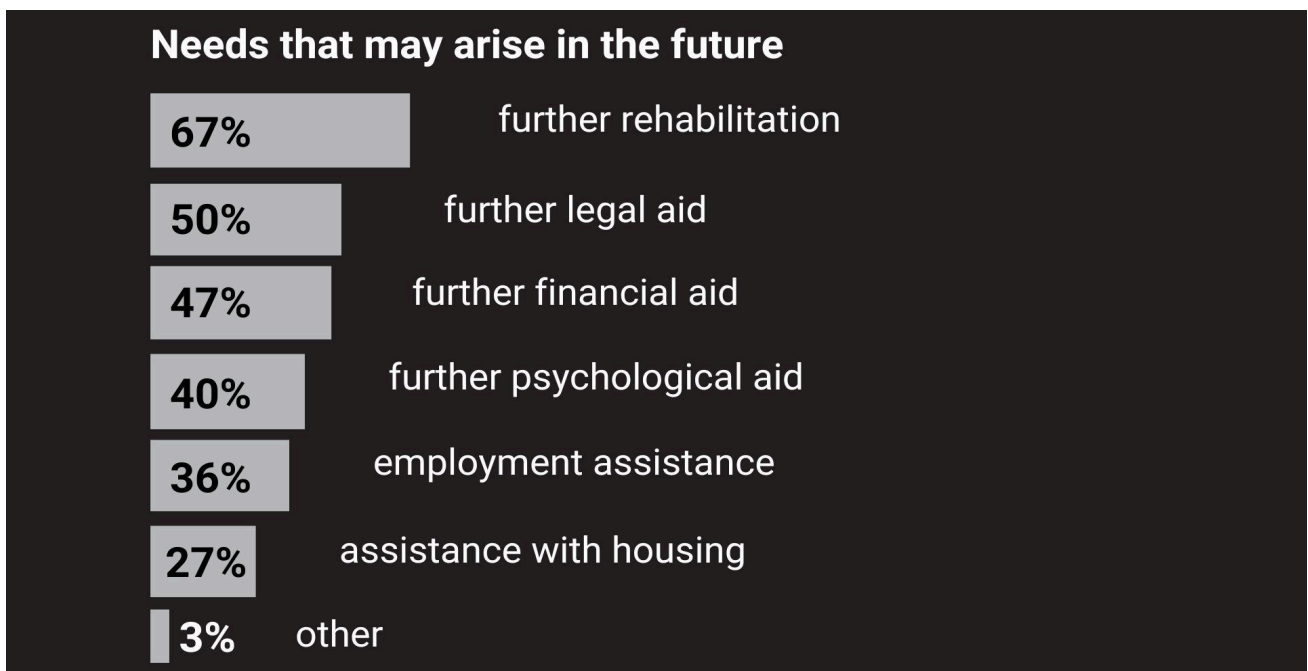
Veterans and their families are different people. State policy should learn to distinguish between their needs and experiences and address them.

We believe that the effective implementation of clearly defined needs of veterans and their family members will not only help beneficiaries to go through the journey of reintegration and rehabilitation, but also significantly strengthen the stability of Ukrainian society in the security, economic, social, and political areas. Moreover, it is the way to meet the clearly defined needs of a veteran that will lead to streamlining budget expenditures, avoiding duplication of approaches and more efficient use of state and community funds.

Needs of Veterans and Their Families

There are no problems relating to veterans. Veterans are people who have fulfilled their civic duty during a critical threat to the interests of the state. Common conditions among them are normal for people who live in circumstances of increased threat to life and health – they are a natural and normal consequence of participating in combat operations. The prevalence of certain conditions and needs among the veteran audience does not translate them into a characteristic of this audience and should not lead to a distortion of the logic of the system in the area of creating veteran-related physicians, offices or specialists. Veterans are users of all services and systems in the state, business, and community. As of 2023, state social guarantees, services and support often do not meet the current needs of users, and rely on outdated legislation. The lack of qualification of the providers of these services is caused by the lack of policies regarding veterans, inappropriate approaches in the education of the necessary specialists and standards of service provision, and insufficient knowledge and low prioritization of the needs and experience of veterans and their families in Ukraine.

According to the research [“The journey of the Injured: Their Needs, Problems and Vision of Their Future” of the Pryncyp Human Rights Center for Military Personnel](#), among the priorities for veterans and their families, in particular, is:

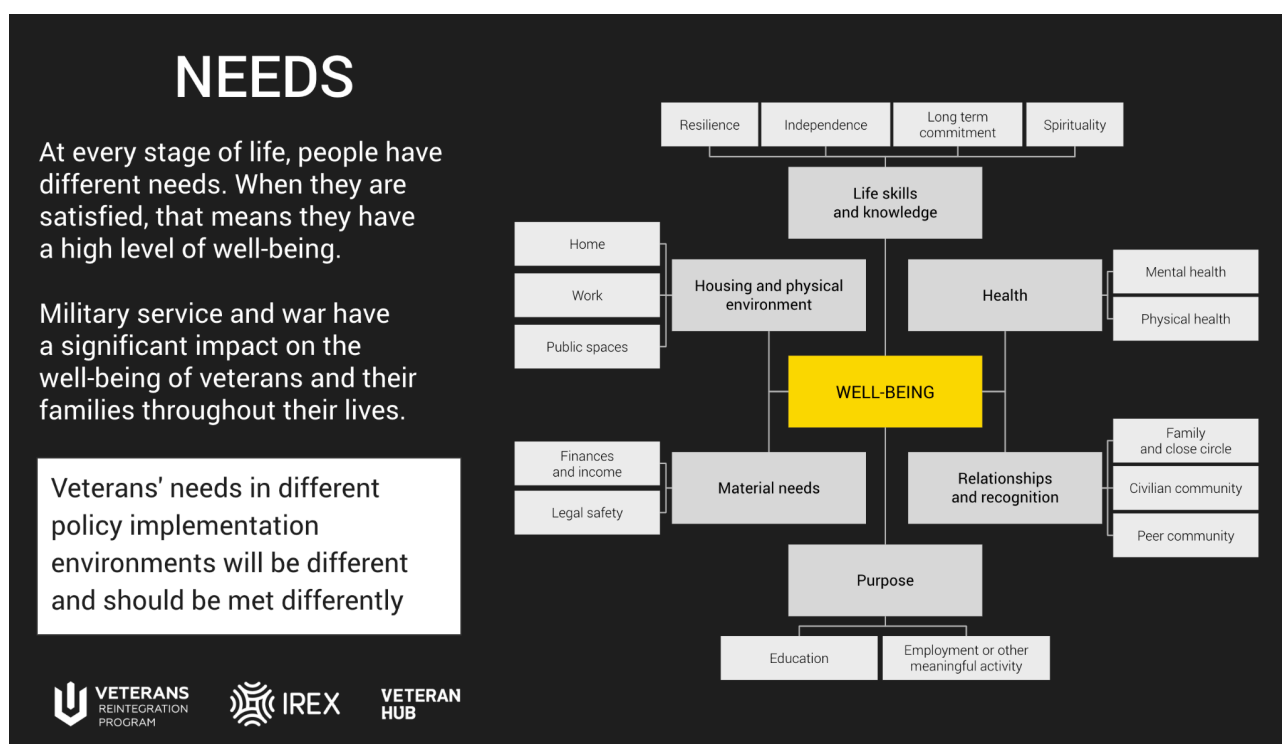


We also recommend specifying the definition of types of government aid to simplify the management of government actions aimed at providing support to target audiences.

Veteran's well-being and journey

Military service in combat conditions has a significant impact on the future life and well-being of warriors. Since 2022, Ukrainian warriors have been completing their service yet during the war. The challenges faced by veterans in civilian and non-peaceful life are natural to their experience. These challenges turn into problems when the environment and community get inaccessible or even hostile to veterans, they are unable to gain insight into their experience, and do not provide appropriate support. Although most veterans are going to successfully overcome the challenges when returning home³⁰, they all need at least some basic support.³¹

For a comprehensive approach to the needs of veterans and their families, we offer a well-being Model. This means the categorization of various human needs, which determines their equivalence for high satisfaction with the standard of living.



To live well, a person must have a high level of well-being at all stages of life. Although the categories of needs will be similar throughout life, the content of needs and their manifestation will differ at different stages.

State policy should provide a comprehensive approach that covers important aspects of the physical, mental and social well-being of veterans. The physical, mental, and social determinants that affect veterans' health and well-being should be considered not independently, but

³⁰ (see Elnitsky, Fisher, & Blevins, 2017, for a comprehensive review)

³¹ (Castro & Kintzle, 2014)

comprehensively. First of all, we are talking about due regard to the high risks of comorbidity of physical and mental problems among veterans.

After gaining combat experience, it is important for veterans to:

1. Have enough time to recover.
2. Take care of themselves and their nearest and dearest.
3. Find new roles for themselves and master them.
4. Have enough mental strength and proper security level to live their life in their own way.

The policy on veterans and their families will affect the entire life journey of today's Ukrainian veterans. To develop a really systematic approach, it is necessary to lay down a long-term planning horizon that covers the predictive life expectancy of veterans.

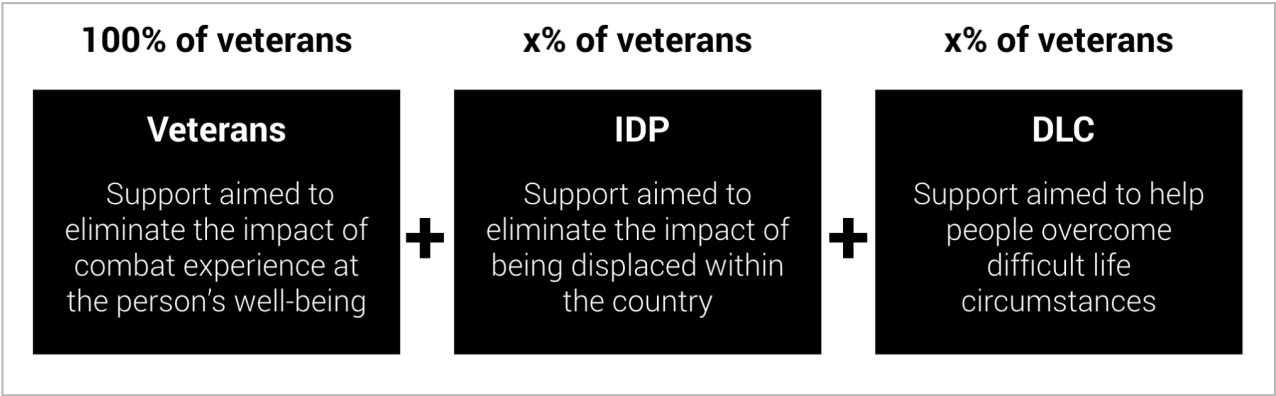


The simultaneous application of well-being, the Veterans journey (and in the case of families – the journey of a Warrior's Dearest One and further research), the journey of the Injured Veterans and the approach suggested by the logic of the document to determining the status of a person allows us to develop a predictive scenario for the comprehensive satisfaction of the needs of veterans and their families. Therefore, when analyzing needs, we suggest relying not on an individual approach, calls for which are heard in public discourse around the policy towards veterans and other social groups, but on a demographic one.

Multiple Statuses Logic

We assume that with proper data and the identification and prioritization of veterans and their families within related statuses, it is possible to develop a predictive scenario for the amount of support that should be provided for these people in a cross-cutting policy.

For example, understanding what proportion of military personnel come from temporarily occupied territories and territories that have been significantly affected by military operations, it is possible to predict the number of veterans with dual IDP status, and lay down the necessary support for them in state programs and budgets.



Example of a predictive approach to multiple statuses.

Identified Problem No. 21

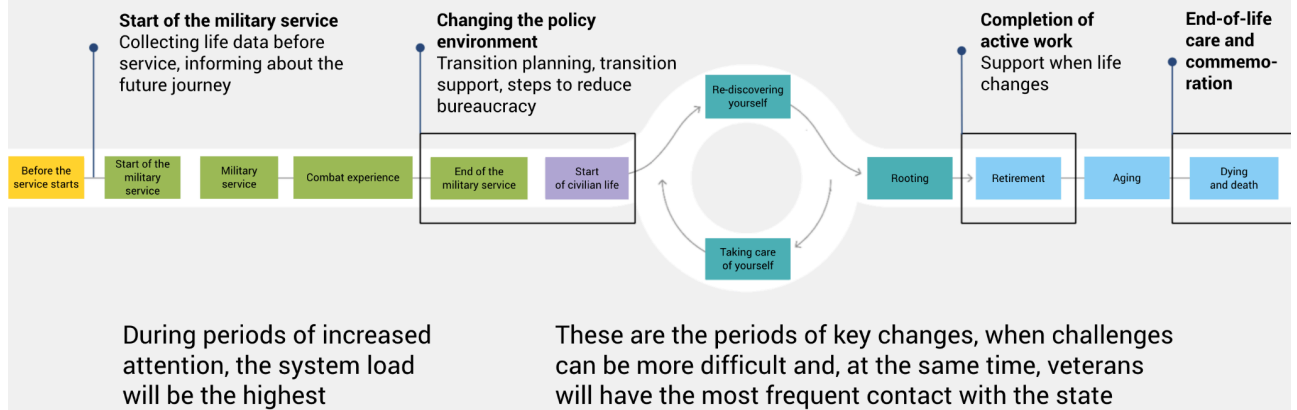
The current policy on veterans and their families does not define the different stages of veterans' lives and respective needs, and therefore offers static solutions throughout their journey, which often do not meet the real needs of veterans. At the same time, the government does not apply the necessary focus when working with veterans and their families, and therefore does not introduce proactive communication with policy beneficiaries in order to identify risks and prevent a negative trajectory of their journey.

Suggested Solution

Identifying periods of increased attention and focusing government resources on communication and interaction with veterans and their families during these periods.

Periods of increased attention

Despite all the complicated nature of the journey, most veterans will successfully overcome the challenges and restore their civilian well-being. In order to support those who may face difficulties in time, it is important to identify periods of increased state policy attention.



Version of the identifying periods of increased attention to state policy, which requires further study and understanding through data and in-depth analysis of the experience of Ukrainian veterans and their families.

We Should Consider the Following

In moments of increased attention, government support should be most pro-active.

Identified Problem No. 22

The experience of veterans' families is heterogeneous, and their journey hinges on the journey of the military/veterans.

Suggested Solution

State policy should flexibly adapt to changes in the journey of a veteran and his or her family, and provide appropriate support routes in the event of captivity, being gone missing, injury, or death of a veteran. This support should be adapted to each policy environment, with due account for the needs of the family at different stages of the journey: during service, in the reserve force and in civilian life.

We Should Consider the Following

Current state policy proactively identifies veterans' families only in the worst case scenario: captivity, death, injury, or if a person has gone missing. These events become a big challenge for the families, who experience stress and grief when being informed of them. However, the government does not provide for proper recognition and support for families in these moments and instead imposes significant administrative responsibility on families in vulnerable situations.

The purpose of this document is to present the general framework of the problem, it is not about a detailed analysis of each of the aspects of veterans' life. We outline some of the solutions that we have already identified, but we should emphasize that in order to develop a comprehensive policy, it is necessary to conduct an expanded analysis of the needs in each of the implementation environments and clearly identify responsible stakeholders. For this purpose, we are going to initiate a number of working groups with more extensive involvement of relevant and expert organizations, government agencies and businesses.

Healthcare

Physical Health

The health of veterans is significantly affected during military service and combat operations. This is not only due to direct injuries, but also due to prolonged exposure to low-level living conditions: changes in nutrition, poor access to drinking water, exposure to extreme temperatures, chronic fatigue, physical exertion, and many other service-related circumstances. After returning to civilian life, the military will suffer from the same diseases as civilians, however, they will have a higher risk of some diseases and conditions' occurrence.

Health problems that are common among veterans after returning from the war can be divided into the following groups:³²:

- **Physical injuries sustained as a result of service or combat operations** (in particular amputations, traumatic brain injuries, diseases of the musculoskeletal system), and related consequences and health risks (for example, an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease and dementia³³), impaired or lost vision and hearing, headache, gunshot wounds;
- **Implications for mental health** (for example, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, high risk of suicide, complex psychological consequences that may also occur due to physical trauma or amputation);
- **Psychoactive substances use and abuse** (including alcohol and tobacco), addiction to narcotic pain medications after long-term treatment of severe injuries;
- **Infectious diseases and related conditions** (hepatitis, HIV infection, tuberculosis, genitourinary system infections, etc.)³⁴;

³² Provision of medical services to ATO/JFO ex-combat participants in Ukraine

<https://www.undp.org/ukraine/publications/provision-medical-services-ato/jfo-ex-combat-participants-ukraine>

³³ Zhu, Carolyn. "Demographic, Health, and Exposure Risks Associated With Cognitive Loss, Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias in US Military Veterans." *Frontiers*,

³⁴ Guidelines for working with veteran and combatant patients, 2020,
https://ingeniusua.org/sites/default/files/other_file/veteran-1_0.pdf

- **Exacerbation and occurrence of chronic diseases** (endocrine, oncological diseases, cardiological disorders, digestive tract disorders, etc.). Some researches also note that veterans are more likely to have multiple chronic illnesses compared to civilians³⁵;
- **Diseases and disorders of the reproductive area** (in particular the reduction of the reproductive ability or infertility);
- **Consequences of exposure to harmful environmental factors** (noise, radiation, or any toxic substances).

We also break down veterans' health problems into the following categories:

- Diseases and conditions that were present before the service and being worsened during the service;
- Diseases, conditions, injuries and wounds that have occurred due to the service and resulted in its completion;
- Diseases, conditions, injuries and wounds that have occurred due to the service and those requiring rehabilitation immediately after its completion or at any subsequent stage;
- Chronic diseases and conditions that have emerged as a result of service and manifest themselves after its completion – in civilian life.

The number of veterans will be growing, and their number cannot be predicted. The development of an individual system is economically inefficient and dangerous in terms of access to the provision of medical services and their quality. Veterans will apply to the same facilities as other Ukrainian citizens, many of whom have also received similar injuries and wounds as a result of military operations. Therefore, it is necessary to develop relevant services for veterans in healthcare facilities located closest to the veterans.

We need to help veterans get the necessary services from the existing system (navigation, case management if necessary), which at the same time requires continued fundamental reforms and development. Areas of assistance should be prioritized, with objectives being realistic. Assistance should have limits – financial, organizational, and temporal ones. It should be life-long for those veterans who have got severe polytraumas and will not be able to restore their functionality and health, and will need constant care and rehabilitation³⁶.

Medical services should not be separated from social services. These areas are equally important for the reintegration of veterans, being often interdependent.

Identified Problems No. 23

³⁵ Boersma P, Cohen RA, Zelaya CE, Moy E. Multiple chronic conditions among veterans and nonveterans: United States, 2015–2018. National Health Statistics Reports; no 153. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2021. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15620/cdc:101659>

³⁶ Recommendations for a policy document on state provision of medical services for veterans of ATO/JFO/Russo-Ukrainian War. Ukrainian Healthcare Center (UHC) with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

There is not enough data, and there is no systematic approach to the existing data array as for its collecting and processing.

The chronic effects of participating in combat operations are poorly understood and studied in Ukraine, and the regulatory framework linking the experience of service and combat operations with health implications needs to be thoroughly updated.

Lack of existing prioritization/segmentation of veterans' needs.

Suggested Solutions

1. Developing a mechanism for joint interdepartmental data collection and analysis, and developing decisions on veterans' health. Appropriate analysis and forecasting should be part of the health policy on veterans and their families.
2. Conducting an analysis of the circumstances and conditions of military service and combat operations, and developing predictive scenarios of implications for the health of veterans.
3. Adapting the regulatory framework in accordance with the conclusions.
4. Examining the most urgent primary health needs of veterans and, above all, expanding access to essential services, especially when resources are limited. At the same time, the long-term strategy should take into account the expansion of infrastructure, information and resources to meet the full range of physical health needs of veterans.

We Should Consider the Following

The system should be developed to meet the needs of veterans (with gender-specific services, counseling, etc. being available).

Identified Problem No. 24

The state's capacity is not enough to provide high-quality treatment, restoration and preservation of the health of veterans. So far, the Medical Guarantees Program (MGP) has not been tested for compliance with the veterans' needs. And the existing system of providing services and benefits is complicated, too bureaucratic and poorly focused on the real needs of the veteran community.

Human dignity, freedom, security, and the right to life and health should be the foundation of all political decisions of the government. This particularly applies to the policy of supporting and restoring the health of veterans who are entitled to free medical care within the framework of the Medical Guarantees Program (MGP).

Suggested Solutions

1. Conducting an audit and expanding the Medical Guarantees Program (SGP) in accordance with the needs caused by military operations on the territory of Ukraine and improving mechanisms to

meet these needs. The list and scope of services, and their implementation mechanisms shall be determined by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

In particular, we suggest:

- expanding medicines reimbursement programs for outpatient treatment (psychiatry, neurology, the list may be expanded over time);
- developing a mechanism and providing coverage of expensive consumables using an individual approach (endoprosthetics, plates (for osteo- and metal-osteosynthesis), screws, hearing aids, the list may be expanded over time).

2. Introducing mechanisms of payment for medical services that are not covered by MGP but are necessary for restoring and maintaining the health of veterans. In particular:

- dental services - oral cavity sanitation and dental prosthetics.
- cancer treatment services.

The list and scope of such services, and their implementation mechanisms shall be determined by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

Such services can be monetized through the following mechanism:

- creating a system that will provide veterans' quick and easy one-click access to the top-priority services (psychological assistance, dental prosthetics, sports activities, etc.). Veterans will be able to independently choose providers and pay for their services from the money allocated from the state budget.

3. Changing the approach to establishing priority groups of veterans, with due account for the presence of diseases or disabilities related to the military service, the need for long-term care, and the need for extra services outside the system.

4. Prioritizing the development of a comprehensive system of physical and psychological rehabilitation for Ukrainian citizens. The list and scope of services, and their implementation mechanisms shall be determined by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

5. Developing and implementing long-term care and rehabilitation systems (lifetime) for persons who have lost their functionality and whose restoration is impossible.

Identified Problem No. 25

The presence of a fragmented and insufficiently funded rehabilitation system with a difficult route to receive services. Lack of specialists in general at all levels of rehabilitation provision.

The rehabilitation system in the civil and military healthcare system cannot cope with the flow of customers during the war, most of whom are veterans. The system lacks the resources to ensure a high-quality long-term recovery, which leads to health implications that could be prevented, and therefore a decline in the overall well-being of veterans and their families.

Suggested Solution

Developing a comprehensive system of physical and psychological rehabilitation for Ukrainian citizens. The list and scope of services, and their implementation mechanisms shall be determined by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. In particular, we suggest:³⁷

- developing and introducing standards for the provision of rehabilitation services.
- organizing training of existing rehabilitation specialists in the amount sufficient to meet the needs.
- ensuring the availability of programs in medical universities for training rehabilitation specialists.
- building up a patient's route.
- changing approaches to rehabilitation (as required, not just due to social status).
- providing access to rehabilitation at various levels (from hospital to home services).
- introducing monitoring of the quality of rehabilitation services rendered.

Identified Problem No. 26

Absence of programs and services for veterans with disabilities and lifelong dependence on healthcare and social systems, as well as absence of support for their nearest (caregivers).

Increase in the number of wounded who have suffered complex physical injuries or loss of functionality occurs in the context of a lack of a properly developed rehabilitation system, and, particularly, specialists and programs that will meet the need of veterans for such long-time rehabilitation and care. At risk are veterans who are unable to count on the support of their nearest and dearest when searching for such services or receiving home care.

Suggested Solution

Developing and implementing a system of long-term care and rehabilitation (lifetime) for persons who have lost their functionality and whose restoration is impossible³⁸. In particular, we suggest:

- creating individual programs and/or services for veterans with complex physical injuries that provide lifelong and comprehensive care for veterans and military personnel and support to their caregivers, including if they are members of that person's family
- introducing a system of continuous rehabilitation care for veterans and military personnel with traumatic brain injury, limb amputations and polytraumas
- changing approaches to the provision of social services
- building up infrastructure for the stay of persons who have lost functionality and whose restoration is impossible

We Should Consider the Following

³⁷ Recommendations for improving the legislation of Ukraine on rehabilitation and coordinating the policies of various state and local government authorities to create a comprehensive system of medical rehabilitation in Ukraine. "Rehabilitation from War Injuries" project, 2023: <https://bit.ly/3CY90Ub>

³⁸ Recommendations for a policy document on state provision of medical services for veterans of ATO/JFO/Russo-Ukrainian War. Ukrainian Healthcare Center (UHC) with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Being the responsibility of at least two ministries, the system of long-term care and rehabilitation requires close cooperation in the development and implementation.

Given the shortage of healthcare workers, the function of caring for the wounded is often taken over by families. It makes the well-being of the whole family suffer, because quite often family members who provide care do not have the ability to continue to simultaneously carry out economic activities and perform other duties. It is necessary to improve the level of identification, awareness raising, training and support of such families, as well as to find mechanisms for paying for their services. One of the options is to revise the regulatory framework for non-professional home care.

Identified Problem No. 27

After completing their service, veterans who have not got injured or wounded are poorly informed about their health status and potential risks that should be considered in the future. Besides, veterans tend to delay seeking medical and psychological help until a critical moment, or may not seek it at all (especially in the case of mental health problems).

Suggested Solution

Introducing the practice of mandatory (and, if necessary, regular) examination by a healthcare professional (most likely a general practitioner), which a veteran can receive free of charge in a healthcare facility.

The examination should be carried out in accordance with the guidelines that are developed for people with military service and combat experience. The examination should take into account the possible implications of military service and participation in combat operations for physical and mental health, include screening for common mental problems or addictions, and take into consideration the comorbidity of diseases common among a veterans' group. Based on the results of the examination, physician may refer veterans to narrow specialists, and also provide a list of resources where the veterans can receive legal or psychological aid or be rendered rehabilitation services. Several options for the frequency of examinations may be considered, depending on the findings of the first visit (one-time or regular)³⁹.

1. Making changes to the procedure for providing primary health care (PHC). The Ministry of Health develops and introduces screening questionnaires for early detection of diseases (traumatic brain injury implications, psychological issues, etc.).
2. Introducing appropriate training for primary care physicians and nurses on early detection of diseases (for example, through the Academy of the National Health Service of Ukraine)

Identified Problems No. 28

Absence of proper information support for veterans during the transition period from military to civilian life and assistance in adapting to civilian life.

³⁹ Recommendations for a policy document on state provision of medical services for veterans of ATO/JFO/Russo-Ukrainian War. Ukrainian Healthcare Center (UHC) with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The policies and strategies of the Security and Defense Forces, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Policy and the Ministry of Veterans Affairs are inconsistent, in particular, in matters of the healthcare of warriors and veterans. The current organizational state of the field of physical health of veterans and the absence of generalized information about available services, programs and opportunities for veterans creates additional obstacles for them to receive high-quality services.

Suggested Solutions

- 1.** Unifying the approaches, policies, and strategies of the various Ministries and Departments in charge of setting rules and providing services to veterans and military personnel. In particular, this applies to the stage of transition from military to civilian life.
- 2.** Providing that the period of transition from military to civilian life included information support, mandatory screening of a primary care physician to prevent and early detect the diseases related to the military service, effective referral based on the findings of screening, in some cases – assessment of needs by case managers who can provide a more individual approach if required.
- 3.** Creating a mechanism for information support of veterans at the stage of transition to civilian life and during adaptation period. Objective: to provide basic information on further steps after dismissal at the end of the service; to provide support to those veterans and their nearest and dearest who face difficulties during the transition and adaptation period. Veterans require the simplest possible criteria for entering the system of providing state-guaranteed services, and should also have a single clear information about all the services and opportunities available to them. In particular, we suggest to introduce:
 - information system (by means of communication), contact center
 - network of support centers (legal aid centers, for example)
 - case management
 - support and advice to the relatives and friends
- 4.** Developing a clear medical route for veterans not only in crisis situations and acute rehabilitation, but also to meet other physical health needs in three policy implementation environments and at all stages of their journey.

We Should Consider the Following

It is impossible to separately consider the health of veterans and the health of a serviceman, because for timely response to potential problems, for the prevention of their occurrence and effective treatment and rehabilitation, we need the Security and Defense Forces to be involved. Only coordinated policies will have an influence on maintaining and restoring the health of veterans.

Reintegration and care for human health should begin during military service, and therefore the development of policies requires close cooperation with the country's law enforcement agencies, and their parallel healthcare systems require reforming and integration into the overall healthcare system.

Ideas should be conceptualized and services prioritized according to primary needs (that is, solving the problem), rather than being determined by official status, number of days of military service, or other factors that cannot help determine the need for assistance.

The integration and adaptation process should be accompanied by people who have an understanding of the problems and needs of veterans (wherever possible).

Identified Problem No. 29

Lack of special training for healthcare workers and people interacting with veterans. This is important to improve and continuously upgrade their knowledge and understanding of the specific features of the experience of participating in combat operations, as well as their needs and the most common problems (physical and mental).

High levels of distrust of the civilian system among veterans, widespread experiences of negative attitudes, stigma, or communication problems.

Suggested Solution

1. Introducing appropriate special training for physicians and nurses to gain insight into the specific features of the experience of participating in combat operations, as well as their needs and the most common problems (physical and mental).
2. Creating a network of healthcare facilities that are friendly to veterans.

The staff of such facilities are more aware of the needs of veterans, they have basic information for the veteran community distributed (for example, a booklet that is provided before dismissal, contacts of psychological or crisis services, awareness raising information about the health of veterans), and these facilities have no architectural or other obstacles.

In the future, it would be possible to consider assigning a manager/coordinator in the facility, whose duties will be the introduction and support in the practices friendly to veterans (with a special focus on staff training), organizing and streamlining the processes of providing medical care to veterans, coordination of activities with the Ministry of Veterans Affairs and updating information on services, and so on⁴⁰.

Identified Problem No. 30

In the final stages of life, veterans and their families fall into a common system of palliative support and administration of processes related to death and commemoration, which require reflection, humanization and changes. However, veterans may face a premature mortality rate, in particular due to aggravation of conditions caused by experience of military service during combat operations, regardless of whether the causal relationship has been recognized officially. Given the lack of

⁴⁰ Recommendations for a policy document on state provision of medical services for veterans of ATO/JFO/Russo-Ukrainian War. Ukrainian Healthcare Center (UHC) with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

capacity of the palliative care system, it is likely that veterans' families will provide the necessary care on their own.

Suggested Solution

Patronage/case management tools should take into account, in particular, the final stages of life, as areas of the state policy's increased attention. From the last months/days of life to funeral services and the mourning period. The government should provide adequate support to veterans' families at the end of their journey and improve, facilitate and humanize bureaucratic support at the end of life and after death.

Service providers should have the appropriate competencies to deal with people in the final stages of life and support relatives during the mourning period.

What does the status of a Participant in Combat Operations provides for today		
Support type	Area of support services	Legislative definition
Benefit	Free medicines	1) free medicines, medicinal products, immunobiological agents and medical devices prescribed by physicians
Warranty	Access to healthcare facilities	8) when retiring (regardless of the time of retirement) or changing the place of work, seek medical advice at polyclinics and hospitals they were registered at the previous place of work
Priority	Priority dental prosthetics	2) priority free dental prosthetics (except for precious metal prosthetics)
Priority	Priority in treatment	10) priority care in healthcare facilities, pharmacies and priority admission to hospital;
Service	Health resort treatment	3) free provision of health resort treatment or compensation for the cost of independent health resort treatment ⁴¹
Service	Health check-up	9) annual medical examination with the necessary specialists involved;

Mental Health

Mental health is defined by WHO as a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. Consequently, mental health and its state are inextricably linked to the overall state of human health and well-being. The proper level of mental health of citizens is of strategic importance for the state. After all, only with a high quality of life, self-confidence, the ability to overcome stress, etc., the development of the country, the growth of well-being and its prosperity are possible.

Mental health is a broad concept that is not limited to the provision of psychological services or the services of a psychiatrist. Mental health recovery is a comprehensive concept that includes treatment, rehabilitation, general and psychosocial support.

⁴¹ {Paragraph 3, Part 1 of Article 12 is suspended for 2023 in accordance with Law No. 2710-IX of November 3, 2022}

During the full-scale invasion, the trend towards normalizing mental health care has increased, with the number of requests for mental health services increased, too. Mental health problems of the population after the war will be among the highest priorities for the state. Moreover, mental health problems will have specific consequences for those who have faced the consequences of war. Prolonged exposure to war conditions is a significant challenge to the psyche, and direct participation in combat operations, injuries, losses, and other circumstances of military service can increase this impact. This applies to both military personnel and civilians who have suffered war-related traumas (those released from captivity, those who lived under occupation, etc.).

Based on previous years' experience and available research, we expect that mental health services will be common among veterans and their families in the first decade after demobilization. The same as with other areas of well-being, we should emphasize that there are not only veteran-related problems. Instead, some conditions that are a normal implication of their experience may be more common among veterans. At the same time, there is not enough research conducted in Ukraine that would confirm the stable prevalence of some conditions among veterans, compared to the civilian population. Given the profound increase in the audience and the complication of cases, we should talk about conducting large-scale comprehensive research in the field of mental health with the involvement of specialists of various levels and further methodological findings. In this context, conclusions about the effectiveness of new treatments should be discussed separately.

Those veterans who need to take care of their mental health and who feel the impact of combat experience on their well-being will look for the necessary services within the general market of mental health services in Ukraine. Consequently, they will inevitably face systemic problems and challenges that exist in this sector.

We would also like to draw attention to the need to be careful about any ideas about compulsory or mandatory mental health treatment formats for individual audiences, especially veterans. Not all veterans will need such services, and any activity must comply with Ukrainian legislation, in particular, guaranteeing the voluntary receipt of mental health services. At the same time, it is important to prioritize veterans' awareness of their own condition and the risks that may arise as a result of combat experience. In the section below, we suggest improvements to the initial screening tool as one of the formats for solving the awareness problem. It is also important to take into account that screening can serve as a tool for verifying and accessing specialized and/or additional services, specialized mental health programs that are compensated from the state budget.

Identified Problem No. 31

Low capacity of the mental health service system. In particular, there is no legislative regulation of psychotherapy services and low regulation of providers' access to the service market, control and responsibility for compliance with professional ethics and protection of interaction subjects.

Suggested Solution

1. Developing a system for preserving and restoring the mental health of Ukrainian citizens. The list and scope of services, and their implementation mechanisms shall be determined by the Cabinet

of Ministers of Ukraine. The specific needs of veterans can be foreseen within the general health system by adapting the model of service delivery and mechanisms for their funding. We suggest:

- Regulating specialists' access to mental health services.
 - Developing and implementing standards for the provision of psychological and psychiatric services, regulate protocols, based on the experience of Ukraine and internationally recognized providers.
 - Organizing high-quality training of existing specialists in psychology and psychiatry in the amount sufficient to meet the needs
 - Ensuring the availability of programs in medical universities for training specialists in psychology and psychiatry
 - Building up a patient's route
 - Providing psychological services at various levels
 - Introducing monitoring of the quality of psychological and psychiatric services rendered
2. Expanding access to specialized mental health services through the development of a network of outpatient facilities.
 3. Providing a separate rehabilitation service as part of the mental health care package under the Medical Guarantees Program.

We Should Consider the Following

Based on the experience of previous years and available research, we expect that during the first decade after demobilization, mental health services will be widespread among veterans and their families. Given the size of the audience, this will inevitably lead to qualitative changes and the development of the market supply. However, we believe that we should avoid creating parallel systems – civil and veteran ones. Apart from the risk of marginalization and negative stereotyping of veterans, the existence of parallel systems is likely to lead to an over-focusing on the specialization of service providers and a gradual loss of competitiveness within the overall market, as well as a decrease in quality due to the inability to financially maintain an excessive network of facilities.

"We should also consider the possibility of launching a separate rehabilitation service as part of the mental health care package. Existing physical rehabilitation packages do not contain a sufficient number of specific services. We are talking about providing additional mental health rehabilitation services for all categories of citizens – both military personnel and veterans, as well as civilians who have suffered the traumatic impact of war", says Kseniia Voznitsyna

Identified Problem No. 32

Even with the rapid development of mental health services, the number of providers will not be sufficient to provide services to all veterans and their families in the coming decade, when we expect the highest demand for such services.

Suggested Solution

1. Developing clear referral protocols for different levels of mental health services – the customer's route.

People need various levels of mental health services. Veterans and their families will also need various level services, depending on individual circumstances, in particular, the stage of life and previous experience. However, it is important that those who need help surely receive it. Therefore, we consider it appropriate to develop and specify referral protocols for various levels of mental health services (informing, psychological counseling, psychotherapeutic support, psychiatric treatment, etc.) and end-to-end training of related service providers (primary care and secondary care physicians, social workers, etc.) according to these protocols.

2. Introducing end-to-end training in first psychological aid to state service providers.
3. Developing a standard and involving primary care physicians in basic mental health education for veterans and their families, raising their awareness of available services, and conducting voluntary primary screening for veterans with subsequent referral to the appropriate level of providers.
4. Organizing training of existing specialists in psychology and psychiatry, in particular, to improve the training of military psychologists and officers of moral and psychological support on the specific features of further service of veterans (combat experience carriers) in the environment of military service and reserve force, as well as on the further journey and experience of veterans in civilian life, so that they can act as a first point of contact.
5. Prioritizing the development of a system of mobile assistance services teams for veterans. These teams may provide emergency care aimed at overcoming the crisis, support and advice to veterans and their nearest and dearest during this process, as well as promote social adaptation of the veterans (assistance with employment, paperwork, etc.). A great advantage will be the staffing of crisis services by specialists who will provide assistance on a peer-to-peer basis and ensure the operation of service delivery teams in remote areas with poorly developed infrastructure for providing psychological services.

We Should Consider the Following

Among the ATO/SFO veterans, there was a high level of trust in the “peer – to – peer” approach, in which the service provider is a carrier of related role experience – a veteran. In particular, veterans tend to trust their fellow warriors and tend to rely on them in civilian life as well. In particular, such programs can help overcome distrust of mental health providers at the beginning of service delivery, and serve as a good entry point to the service delivery system. However, we call for caution and the necessary professional ethics in implementing and communicating peer-to-peer programs in Ukraine in the next decade. Taking care of other people is a big responsibility, and people who become providers of psychosocial services should first of all have enough of their own mental readiness, have stability and well-being in their own lives. When developing peer-to-peer services, it is

important to take into account the “Do No Harm” principle in relation to both customers and providers of such services.

Identified Problem No. 33

Veterans and their families, as well as the civilian population in Ukraine, are insufficiently aware about mental health issues, they face biases and are cautioned about having mental health services rendered, and are already accumulating negative experiences when interacting with an undeveloped system of mental health services, which can serve as a key barrier to seeking these services in the future.

At the same time, the state system regarding dismissal from military service provides for a tool for initial mental health screening within the framework of the Military Medical Commission procedure, but this tool is outdated and cannot serve as a basis for developing an effective state policy in its current presentation. Moreover, according to Paragraph 3.13 of the Regulations on Military Medical Expertise in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, approved by the Order of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine No. 402 of August 14, 2008, citizens can be dismissed from military service to be further listed in the reserve force or retired without a medical examination by the Military Medical Commission conducted. In this case, they are required to undergo a medical examination no later than five years after their dismissal. If more than five years have passed since the dismissal, the medical examination by the Military Medical Commission should be carried out for accounting purposes with the determination of the degree of fitness for military service at the present time, while the causal relationship of the disease or the implications of the injury are not established. Therefore, not all conscripted military personnel are required to pass the Military Medical Commission upon dismissal, so information about their health status, including mental health, is incomplete.

Suggested Solution

1. Raising awareness among veterans and their families of mental health care and the principles of quality care for themselves and their well-being.

Ensuring that high-quality mental health services are available to veterans and their families, and they remain a key solution. However, high-quality and comprehensive awareness of mental health care and the services that contribute to it can help overcome stigma and engage veterans in receiving services.

2. Considering improvement or implementation of a new process for initial mental health screening (mental health assessment study) at the time of dismissal from service, but not later than 18 months after demobilization, while the organization's mechanism should be consistent with the comprehensive reform of the Military Medical Commission and the demobilization processes.

We Should Consider the Following

Due to the insufficient quality of the mental health system, customer awareness can serve as an additional factor in quality control and compliance of services. It is important to raise awareness

among veterans and their families not only about the availability of mental health services, but also about the rules and regulations for providing such services, the characteristics of a quality specialist, the principles of confidentiality and the means to protect their own rights in the process of receiving services.

Identified Problem No. 34

Veterans and their families who have been traumatized as a result of military operations, may face various conditions of mental health disorders. Some of these conditions make it difficult to identify their own needs independently. It may also be more difficult for them to find the right specialist, identifying the needs for working with this particular specialist.

Suggested Solution

Using a customer support tool (for example, case management)⁴² working with veterans at all stages – starting with recruitment, service, return home, and rooting in civilian life. To implement the tool, we should take the best advantage of the existing resources.

What does the status of a Participant in Combat Operations provides for today		
Support type	Area of support services	Legislative definition
Mental health support is stipulated in other legal regulatory documents, outside of the Participant in Combat Operations status		

Material Needs and Security

During the service, the military have limited access and opportunities to manage their own civilian capital, and after it is completed, it takes time to restore and build up their civilian well-being.

By civilian capital, we mean the wealth, property, and income that the military was receiving before serving. In the war, unlike civilians', the attention of the military is focused on performing military missions, and civilian assets can, under the most favorable circumstances, be left in the same state as before the service, but usually they get into a rundown condition.

Despite changes in the material support of the military after the full-scale invasion and a significant increase in material remuneration for performing military tasks, reality speaks for the impossibility of significant personal savings during service, in particular, due to a significant lack of provision for the military and their units, which are often covered by private payments of the military themselves, as well as the significant impact of military service on the well-being of families and the ability of a spouse to continue economic activity.

Veterans who need funding for their treatment, rehabilitation, and prosthetics face numerous difficulties in obtaining the necessary payments. As our research has shown, the sources of funding for treatment and rehabilitation are usually their own funds and family funds at the same level as the

⁴² Among the successful examples of support experience are clinical case managers of Lisova Poliana, who are able to help formulate such needs and create an appropriate algorithm of actions.

government funding. So, the situations arise now and again when certain medical services turn out to be paid by veterans, while bureaucratic obstacles make receiving payments impossible. Most of the problems associated with bureaucratic obstacles arise due to the absence of any awareness among the veterans about algorithms for having their treatment and rehabilitation funded. With a generally negative trend, the level of awareness varies depending on the duty station. One of the most problematic areas in the awareness raising process are military units that are unable to effectively support the transition of a serviceman to the treatment and rehabilitation stage. Another significant component of this problem is that even after going through difficult processes to initiate payments, veterans face significant delays in the process of their receiving.

Besides, the issue of payments for veterans also has a significant symbolic value, that is, it is a marker of the attitude of the state and Ukrainian society as a whole towards them. So, payments are a tool for creating a sense of justice and self-esteem. Accordingly, problems or significant delays in payments for veterans, on the contrary, are clear manifestations of public indifference and ingratitude.

Identified Problem No. 35

After demobilization, veterans may not have time to recover due to a lack of personal savings. Veterans get dismissed from the service in an extremely short time and return to their own civilian capital, which they did not always have time to increase or even retain. Therefore, during the transition period, when time for recreation and recovery is extremely important for a positive trajectory of their journey, veterans often find themselves in a situation of the absence of funds and the need for instant reinstatement at work to have a possibility to generate a basic income for their families.

Moreover, the veterans who have retained their place of work are required to go to work the next day after registration in the Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Center, which on the one hand speaks for the fact that a person will not need to look for a job, but on the other hand, those dismissed from military service are in dire need of recreation, as the possibility to have a good rest has a significant impact on the further process of reintegration. Current legislation does not guarantee the right to have a rest after service and leaves the regulation of these arrangements to the responsibility of the employer, which may lead to increased inequality of transitional experience among veterans, depending on the responsibility and social orientation of their civilian employers.

Suggested Solution

Introducing a transition period and providing a one-time cash payment **or** temporary (for a period of up to three months) extension of salary payments from the military budget for veterans during demobilization.

We Should Consider the Following

The amount of payment requires additional calculation, but the need for instant reinstatement at work after service usually takes three months, according to our observations.

We should also take into consideration the draft law [No. 8313 of December 27, 2022](#) on the right of military personnel to vacation and recreation after demobilization, which was adopted as a basis on May 3, 2023 and is currently being prepared for the second reading. The draft law suggests to provide demobilized military personnel with a recreation period lasting 60 working days with the payment of a two-month monetary allowance from the state budget of Ukraine. It has a number of drawbacks that need to be refined. However, such draft laws may have a positive impact on a person dismissed from the service, for his or her further reintegration. These initiatives require the involvement of specialists for discussion, but they must be implemented in the legislation.

Identified Problem No. 36

Veterans who continue their journey in the environment of the reserve force, in particular, the active and standby reserves, do not have guarantees as to the sustainability of their efforts to take root in civilian life due to the risk of re-mobilization, as a result of which their civilian capital will be negatively affected once again. This group of veterans will also put more effort and resources into maintaining their own operational fitness, will most likely be involved in enhanced training, etc., which will affect their ability to generate sustainable income and savings in civilian life.

Suggested Solution

When developing a policy on veterans and their families in the reserve force environment, and regulatory changes regarding reserve force management, taking into account the specific aspects of the journey of veterans and the actual impact of continuing to serve in the reserve force on them and their families, and suggesting ways to compensate for this impact and their work during their stay in the reserve force.

We Should Consider the Following

Military service during the war and periods of other critical threats to the state significantly affects the material stability of veterans and their families. In particular, this is due to a change in the environment of human jurisdiction and a related change in state statuses from civil to military and vice versa. In Ukraine, as in many other countries, the Armed Forces and military structures exist in parallel with civilian ones. So, the military have their own system of law and order, they manage their finances differently, and so on.

What does the status of a Participant in Combat Operations provides for today		
Support type	Area of support services	Legislative definition
Privilege	Increased percentage of disability payments	To participants of combat operations, pensions or monthly lifetime allowances or government social assistance paid in lieu of a pension are increased in the amount of 25 percent of the subsistence minimum for persons who have lost their ability to work
Warranty	Temporary disability allowance makes up 100% regardless of the length of service	11) payment of temporary disability allowance in the amount of 100 percent of an average salary, regardless of the length of service

Benefit	Discount on housing and communal services	4) 75% discount of payment for the use of housing (rent) within the limits of the regulations provided for by the current legislation (21 sq. m of the total area of housing for each person permanently residing in a residential building (house) and entitled to a discount of payment, and an additional 10.5 sq. m per family);
Benefit	Discount on housing and communal services	5) 75% discount on payment for the use of utilities (gas, electricity and other services) and liquefied bottled gas for domestic needs within the average consumption standards.
Benefit	Discount on housing and communal services	6) 75% discount on the cost of fuel, including liquid fuel, within the limits of the regulations established for sale to the public, for persons living in houses that do not have central heating system;
Payment	One-time financial aid for the Independence Day	18) from the taxes, fees, duties and other payments to the budget in accordance with the tax and customs legislation, every year before the Independence Day of Ukraine, participants in combat operations are paid a one-time financial aid in accordance with the procedure and amounts determined by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine within the relevant budget assignments established by the Law on the State Budget of Ukraine.

Legal Security

Access to legal aid is critical to the safety of veterans and their families, according to sociological studies conducted before and after the full-scale invasion. It is declared that veterans can count on those tools that were created for all citizens or on specialized authorities. However, in reality, there are many challenges to the possibility to obtain legal protection.

Identified Problem No. 37

The Ministry of Veterans Affairs is assigned with monitoring compliance with the state of respect for the rights and freedoms of veterans and their families. However, as of September 2023, no information about such monitoring and its results has been found in open sources, which makes us assume that that function is inefficiently performed by the authority.

Suggested Solution

It is necessary to strengthen the capability of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs to monitor the state of respect for the rights and freedoms of veterans and their families. For this purpose, an audit of existing tools and reviewing their effectiveness should be conducted.

We Should Consider the Following

An important part of the solution is building stable cooperation with other departments, in particular, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ombudsman's Office and others.

Identified Problem No. 38

The right to free legal aid is in demand among veterans and their families, but due to the lack of awareness of veterans, insufficient financial support and workload of legal aid centers, it is not fully implemented⁴³.

The right to free legal aid within the framework of the Free Legal Aid System of the Ministry of Justice includes the following types of legal services: protection, representation of a person in courts, other government authorities, local self-government bodies, before other persons, drawing up procedural documents.

Suggested Solution

Free Legal Aid System is a unified and extensive network that has representatives even in rural and remote areas. Strengthening its capacity to provide advice and assistance to veterans and their families should be a priority for the future strategy and action plan.

In particular, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and public organizations, employees of the aid system should be trained on issues relevant to veterans and their families.

A possible solution is to add a separate area in the Free Legal Aid System for dealing with veterans and their families.

We Should Consider the Following

"Among the negative consequences of granting this benefit is, first of all, the lack of qualification of employees of free legal aid centers on certain issues, since they have a common specialization, which leads to insufficient quality implementation of such a right; the workload of the Legal Aid Bureau system due to the fact that the Free Legal Aid System does not have a distribution by areas of work, in particular, there is no separate area of legal assistance to veterans, military personnel and their families established"⁴⁴.

In practice, in most cases, veterans do not apply to the above state-operated structures, but to private lawyers and public organizations. According to the sociological study "The journey of the Injured: Their Needs, Challenges and Vision of Their Future", some of the surveyed servicemen consider contacting lawyers or public organizations to be the most effective mechanisms for protecting their rights.

Identified Problem No. 39

Veterans and their families are not sufficiently aware of their rights, benefits and services guaranteed to them by the government. Problems arise with the list of documents, an authority to apply to, or the general procedure for granting a particular benefit. Some veterans are completely unaware of the existence of certain guarantees.

⁴³ Analysis of the social protection system for veterans and military personnel. *Legal Hundred*. 2022. Article 111. URL: <https://legal100.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022-Bila-kniga.pdf>

⁴⁴ Analysis of the social protection system for veterans and military personnel. *Legal Hundred*. 2022. Article 111. URL: <https://legal100.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022-Bila-kniga.pdf>

Suggested Solution

Proper awareness raising should be part of building up the process of accessibility of rights, benefits and services. At the strategy level, it is necessary to prioritize this area and plan joint operation of responsible departments to make information available to the veterans and their families at all levels.

We Should Consider the Following

When planning, it is necessary to develop a plan to assess the transparency and accessibility of the chosen communication for beneficiaries. One of the priorities should be overcoming the problem of misinformation of service providers themselves about the correct procedures.

What does the status of a Participant in Combat Operations provides for today		
Support type	Area of support services	Legislative definition
Benefit	Payment of the court fee	benefit for payment of the court fee - 13) participants of combat operations, injured participants of the Revolution of Dignity, Heroes of Ukraine - in the cases related to the violation of their rights
Service	Free legal aid	receiving free legal aid in the Free Legal Aid System - war veterans and family members of the fallen (deceased) war veterans, family members of fallen (deceased) Defenders of Ukraine, persons of special merits - for all types of legal services provided for in Part 2, Article 13 of this Law;

Housing and Physical Environment

Military service, even in combat conditions, does not lead to the loss of housing by veterans and changes in their physical environment after the service. However, the needs of housing and the physical environment are changing and must be addressed in order to enable citizens' basic rights to housing and mobility.

We break down the problems of this area of well-being into several groups of needs, all of which may refer to the same person.

Status	Detailed well-being	Need	Problems of veterans within the audience	Possible solution
A person with a disability	Housing	Using their own housing on their own	There are common comorbidity conditions in which veterans may face additional problems caused by the unavailability of the environment and their health status	Paid readjustment of housing to the level of functionality and mobility needs or financing of new housing, if it is impossible to readjust.
	Working environment	Being able to work and		Employers' commitment to mandatory accessibility of

		generate income		the work environment
	Public environment	Moving freely and independently		Obligations of local authorities to ensure mandatory accessibility of the public environment for people with different needs and different levels of mobility or reimbursement of support and transportation costs
Internally displaced person	Housing	Having a place to live Restoring lost housing	Delayed period for obtaining IDP status due to the circumstances of the military service	Prioritization of veterans among the general line of IDPs
Other statuses that indicate experiences that may affect housing needs				Prioritization or privilege of dual status carriers, if appropriate and necessary

Housing

According to our suggested logic for filling in statuses (see for further details ____), housing needs do not arise directly due to the influence of combat experience and veteran status. However, as a matter of fact, veterans, like all citizens, are affected by the war and will be entitled to additional statuses that provide for addressing housing needs. After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the issue of housing has become even more acute, given the massive destruction of housing not only in the frontline zone.

Thus, we consider it important to prioritize veterans within waiting lines and programs of related statuses, when applying the multiple statuses approach.

Currently, the government declares assistance to veterans and their families in providing housing, even if they have property rights or property rights on the real estate that was destroyed or became uninhabitable as a result of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation.

Veterans who need better housing conditions can take advantage of state guarantees related to this issue, if they are on the housing register with local governments.

So, according to the current legislation, veterans have the right to:

- priority in state housing provision;
- soft housing loans from Derzhmolodzhytlo (state fund to support housing construction for young people);
- receiving compensation for residential premises they have not obtained;
- obtaining a loan for the construction, reconstruction or major repairs of residential buildings, as well as a loan for the construction or purchase of country houses and landscaping of garden

plots with repayment within 10 years starting from the fifth year after the completion of construction, etc.

However, the exercise of the respective rights of veterans goes together with bureaucracy and a very long wait. But those guarantees that veterans could have taken advantage of faster than they expect to receive housing or compensation for it are rarely communicated (for example, mortgages).

Identified Problem No. 40

Programs aimed at veterans' housing are often declarative in nature and are not budget-supported. In 2023, some housing programs did not receive any funding. In particular, the budget program "Providing Government Support for the Construction (Purchase) of Affordable Housing" was funded from the government and/or local budgets. We should note that the program "Affordable Housing" has no funding at all. There is an explanation made by the Chairman of the Derzhmolodzhytlo Housing Fund's Board Serhii Komnatnyi regarding the financing situation.

Also, the cost of carrying out free overhaul of a residential building is financed by a corresponding subvention from the state budget to local budgets within the limits of approved budget assignments for the corresponding year, however the Distribution of State Budget Expenditures for 2023 does not provide for such a subvention.

Despite the fact that more funds have been channeled in recent years to pay compensation for unobtained housing, this was still not enough to meet the needs of all veterans. Given the full-scale invasion, massive destruction of houses and temporary occupation, the need will increase several times, which will complicate the processes even more.

Suggested Solution

Being provided housing is one of the basic needs of veterans, which serves as a prerequisite for their active reintegration. Apart from the accommodation waiting list (which shows a very slow progress, with the number of people who have lost their homes constantly growing), it is necessary to provide more alternative mechanisms (leasing programs, concessional lending, and so on). We should also consider the fact that veterans are not the only applicants for housing, as apart from them more than twenty other categories of people have an extraordinary and priority right to housing, which significantly increases the waiting time.

It is important to understand that people who have been on the accommodation waiting list for years should receive what is guaranteed to them by the government, or have some alternative ways to ensure decent living conditions.

We Should Consider the Following

The availability of various housing programs does not actually make housing accessible to everyone, so, as a rule, such programs exist on paper only and are not being implemented, as a matter of fact. The government should not just declare the veteran's right to housing, but make this right accessible. It is clear that the government is unable to provide housing for everyone, and therefore we should not put our trust in the guarantee that every veteran or person with a disability will be

given an apartment, but instead develop more soft loans, and so on. Veterans are mostly able-bodied people who would have been able to provide themselves and their families with housing on their own, but due to the fulfillment of their constitutional duty to protect the homeland, they did not have such an opportunity. In such cases, the veteran's family suffers as well, as it is forced to live in constant waiting. Often such waiting turns out to be in vain. Therefore, the government should take care to help the veterans and their families purchase or build housing independently by introducing preferential targeted loans. A veteran was defending the state in times of danger, losing his time during which he could have provided himself and his family with housing. Therefore, the state must compensate now for his lost time by setting a preferential interest rate or compensating interest for using the loan, or even partially compensating the loan.

Identified Problem No. 41

Analyzing the housing programs that are currently provided for by the government, we can conclude that most of them guarantee their own right to receive housing. However, it is also important to provide programs that will regulate the adaptation of housing for people with war-related disabilities.

Suggested Solution

Free and independent use of housing and movement are basic human rights. We urge to primarily focus on veterans who carry the dual status of a person with a disability (now a person with a war-related disability), and to ensure proper affordable housing, which is equipped in accordance with their needs, provided for in Article 30 of the Law of Ukraine "[On the Fundamentals of Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine](#)".

We Should Consider the Following

The government should take care that people who defended its territorial integrity and now have the status of a person with disability have not just housing, but one that meets their physical needs, makes it possible for them to live independently and move around. Therefore, housing programs should mainly focus not on providing living space, but on adapting residential premises to the needs of a veteran, at least if such a veteran has a disability.

What does the status of a Participant in Combat Operations provides for today		
Support type	Area of support services	Legislative definition
Priority	Priority in the accommodation waiting list and priority in the land acquisition waiting list.	14) priority provision of living space to people in need of better housing conditions, and priority allocation of land plots for individual housing construction, gardening, priority repair of residential buildings and apartments of these persons and providing them with fuel
Service	Construction and repair loans	15) obtaining a loan for the construction of a house, reconstruction or overhaul of residential buildings and outbuildings, connecting them to the utility and communication lines, as well as a loan for the construction or purchase of

		country houses and landscaping of garden plots with repayment within 10 years starting from the fifth year after the completion of construction. These loans shall be granted in accordance with the procedure determined by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine;
Priority	Priority for joining cooperatives	16) priority right to join housing and construction cooperatives, cooperatives established for the construction and operation of collective garages, parking lots and their maintenance, horticultural associations, to purchase supplies for individual construction and garden houses

Social Environment and Mobility

The post-war reconstruction of Ukraine will certainly include a revision of the principles of settlements planning and development policies. It is crucial that these principles take into account the needs of veterans and veterans with disabilities and other implications of injuries, in particular. It will be possible to take these needs into account to the full extent only provided the principles of urban planning are radically revised, with due account for barrier-free access not as an option advantage, but as an integral basis of planning projects.

It is important to understand that the “vulnerability” of certain groups, including people with war-related disabilities, is not a specific property of these groups, but a consequence of the insufficient level of inclusion of Ukrainian infrastructure and institutions. Therefore, work on increasing the level of inclusiveness of Ukrainian infrastructure and institutions will greatly contribute to the reintegration of people with war-related disabilities (and, in broader sense, veterans with injuries), as well as debunking stereotypical associations of these experiences with the state of “vulnerability”.

Identified Problem No. 42

Public spaces of Ukrainian cities do not contribute to the preservation of mobility and reintegration of veterans with changes in functionality due to injuries, traumas and diseases, in particular, those that led to the acquiring of disability status, and often make it completely impossible for people to move independently (mainly if their disability is associated with disorders of the musculoskeletal system). Non-compliance with the principles of barrier-free access even in basic infrastructure facilities is a significant stress factor and an obstacle to further integration of veterans into the life of society and their real ability to improve their own well-being.

Suggested Solution

Ensuring accessibility and barrier-free environment of all possible public spaces is a basic and fundamental requirement for physiological rehabilitation and active reintegration of veterans. Simultaneously with ensuring the accessibility and barrier-free environment of public spaces, it is necessary to promote the increase of public facilities and publicly accessible facilities of communal property in urban planning.

Besides, it is important to ensure that all public transport vehicles are adapted for people with disabilities. It is important that road, rail, air, and sea transport of local, interregional, and international transport networks meet the barrier-free criteria.

Also, urban planning should take into account the needs of veterans who have suffered injuries that complicate the perception of noise and light pollution (barotraumas, acubarotraumas, post-traumatic stress disorders, and so on). The solution should be the introduction of transparent regulation of light and noise pollution in Ukrainian cities and the development of effective mechanisms for this regulation.

What does the status of a Participant in Combat Operations provides for today		
Support type	Area of support services	Legislative definition
Benefit	Free travel by public transport	7) free travel by all types of urban passenger transport, public road transport in rural areas, as well as by rail and water transport of suburban traffic and buses of suburban and intercity routes, including intra- district, intra- and inter-regional, regardless of distance and place of residence, if there is a duly issued identity card, and in the case of introduction of an automated fare accounting system, an electronic ticket issued free of charge
Benefit	Free travel and fare discount	17) free travel once every two years (round trip) by rail, water, air or intercity road transport, regardless of the availability of railway communication, or travel once a year (round trip) by the specified modes of transport with a 50% discount;

Vocation

After completing their service, veterans from the reserve force and those who return to civilian life for good will look for a new vocation and self-fulfillment.

Today, the state guarantees the provision of government targeted support for obtaining professional (vocational and technical) education, professional pre-higher and higher education, as well as professional adaptation (including training, retraining and advanced training) at various levels of education. Such support is provided to veterans, their families and the families of the fallen warriors.

Work Environment and Vocation

Like all citizens, veterans and their families are represented in all sectors of the economy and play a significant role in the economic life of the country. The significant duration and intensity of mobilization service, which has been typical for the Ukrainian Armed Forces for the last decade, contributes to a serious reevaluation of the life guidelines of veterans and their families, and significantly affects their well-being and lifestyle. Such a revaluation can make a person change the field of activity after returning from the military service.

As in other areas of well-being, veterans will be actors of all systems and processes in the state, in particular those related to employment and entrepreneurship. Given the re-mobilization of a significant proportion of ATO/SFO veterans, it is still too early to talk about the prevalence of certain trends in the professional fulfillment of veterans and their families. But we should highlight a number

of systemic solutions based on research on the experience of ATO/SFO veterans until 2022, as well as monitoring the dynamics of customer requests to our organizations during the period of the full-scale invasion.

Identified Problem No. 43

The work environment and job activities have a significant impact on the experience of veterans and their families. Military structures differ significantly from civilian companies and institutions in terms of management format, job descriptions, and so on. Civilian employers often do not understand the specific aspects of military activities and cannot assess the value of the competencies acquired by veterans during service for the civilian labor market.

Suggested Solution

Update the classifier of professions and legitimate approaches to the description and categorization of military accounting and civil positions. This will contribute to understanding of veterans' competencies in the transition to the civilian labor market and develop potential career routes more correctly, taking into account the professional experience gained during the military service.

We Should Consider the Following

In 2021, Veteran Hub and IREX ⁴⁵ developed and published a pilot project on ["translation" of military posts into civilian language](#). First of all, users look for a clear description of their own duties while in military service. Given a large number of civilians being further involved in military service, a clear description of their official duties will help, in particular, improve understanding and coordination within the Armed Forces. However, in the process of analyzing official duties and interviewing veterans, the organization concluded that the actual duties and competencies of the military often had significant differences with their formal description in the statutory documentation.

Identified Problem No. 44

Increasing the target audience of the policy on veterans and their families is radically changing the tools for providing services and meeting needs. The thesis is becoming relevant not so much about the "reintegration of veterans", but about building a society focused on veterans. At the same time, in modern Ukrainian society there is no sufficient number of specialists of various profiles who are capable of effective interaction with veterans and family members. We are talking about training a large number of specialists in providing social services, administrative, healthcare, legal, and other services.

Suggested Solution

- Optimization of tools for interaction with veterans in the process of providing services to the audience of veterans and their families. Development, approval, and scaling of training programs for a wide number of specialists.

⁴⁵ as part of the Veterans Reintegration Program supported by the U.S. Department of State

- Development and introduction of new professional standards in terms of working with veterans.

We Should Consider the Following

In the process of providing services to veterans and people having direct war experience, it is important to have a whole range of new knowledge and skills, enhanced by new interaction tools. In particular, case management tools look promising both in relation to active military personnel, and at the stage of transition, as well as reintegration in communities.

It should be noted that the case management tool has proven its effectiveness at the stage of accompanying injured servicemen in healthcare facilities.

Identified Problem No. 45

In the event of injury, missing persons, captivity or death of veterans, their family members assume significant administrative and other roles that require immediate and significant involvement, both physical and emotional. The burden on families at such times makes it impossible for them to work for a certain period of time. However, families do not have the ability to control force majeure and plan their own involvement, but they must respond by shifting other personal priorities. Currently, family members of veterans who were injured, missing, captured or killed do not have guarantees and protection before the employer.

Suggested Solution

Legislating the right to extraordinary leave and employment guarantees for family members of veterans who were injured, missing, captured or killed.

We Should Consider the Following

The duration of such leave and the preservation of guarantees should be calculated additionally, by conducting in-depth analysis of the experience of families.

Identified Problem No. 46

Veterans who continue to serve in the reserve force environment may potentially experience reduced competitiveness within the civilian labor market due to the impossibility of sustainable long-term planning and maintaining the pre-emptive right to employment of such veterans by the Security and Defense Forces.

Suggested Solution

Developing a system of solutions to protect the competitiveness of reserve veterans in civilian employment.

We Should Consider the Following

The conditions of service in the reserve force should not become a factor of discrimination and harassment against veterans and their families, and the development and implementation of changes to the conditions of service in the reserve force should take into account the interests both of the state and the security, and defense sector, and also of veterans themselves.

Identified Problem No. 47

Veteran entrepreneurs and their families who want to start, maintain or develop their own businesses face additional challenges, especially during re-mobilization. Long-term involvement of owners, co-owners and managers of enterprises reduces their competitive ability in the market.

Suggested Solution

Developing a system of incentive programs to develop and support the sustainability of entrepreneurship among veterans and their families, in particular:

1. Developing a support system for starting business initiatives.
2. Considering tax incentives for entrepreneurship among veterans and their families.
3. Considering the possibility of prioritizing veteran business proposals in public procurement.
4. Identifying the subjectivity of the other spouse and family units when formulating the definition of a veteran business.
5. Developing a system of supporting programs for veterans' businesses for the period of re-mobilization of veteran owners and co-owners.

We Should Consider the Following

During the mobilization service, veterans who own or co-own businesses usually do not have the opportunity to continue managing their affairs efficiently. In the environment of small and medium-sized businesses, the involvement of another spouse in a managerial role during the absence of a veteran, regardless of competencies and previous experience, has become a stable trend. However, business management is not the only new and additional responsibility for such people, and the role of the military's partners is full of emotional and administrative difficulties. Therefore, such enterprises require increased attention and support during and after the service of owners and co-owners of businesses to ensure their sustainability and development in difficult times.

Identified Problem No. 48

With the data currently available, it is not possible to establish a clear forecast scenario for the future distribution of veterans among economic industries. Given the large number of citizens who serve under mobilization, and therefore are of working age and come from all segments of the population, we assume a cross-cutting prevalence of veterans in the economic industries after military service. At the same time, among ATO/JFO veterans and veterans in other countries, changing jobs after

military service is a common phenomenon, so we can assume the demand for retraining and changing jobs among Ukrainian veterans in the first decade after demobilization.

Suggested Solution

Providing veterans with access to retraining and employment throughout the civilian labor market.

We Should Consider the Following

Veterans are free to choose any role for themselves after military service. State policy should avoid stigmatizing and stereotyping veterans as carriers of certain qualities or creating an artificial impression of veterans belonging to some industries above others.

Identified Problem No. 49

Global companies that are present in many global markets, at the same time, are wary of public communication regarding any relationship with the Security and Defense Forces and avoid proactive hiring of veterans in Ukraine and other countries, even if they develop and introduce internal support programs for them, because the public position on hiring veterans can be perceived as political.

Suggested Solution

Developing a system of government motivation to encourage international businesses to actively hire veterans when working in the Ukrainian market and share responsibility for obligations with businesses.

We Should Consider the Following

Employment programs for veterans and their families should be aimed at overcoming the impact of military service on opportunities for civilian implementation and protecting the competitiveness of veterans in relation to the civilian population. You should be wary of ideas about the obligation to hire veterans and their families under the quota system, because this approach can lead to nominal hiring as opposed to proactive hiring.

Identified Problem No. 50

Employers play a significant role in the lives of many veterans, but as the audience grows, they strive to develop sustainable policies and practices for systematic and consistent interaction with veterans in the workplace. Currently, the state does not offer unified approaches and standards for supporting veterans in the workplace, and the efforts of the business community are fragmented and often duplicate the efforts of other players.

Suggested Solution

Synchronizing best practices and attracting government capabilities to raise awareness about high-quality interaction with veterans among Ukrainian employers. Considering systematization of the most effective approaches at the legislative level.

We Should Consider the Following

In response to the demand among employers, and drawing on extensive experience in advising and supporting veterans and their families, community associations have developed a number of useful resources for interacting with veterans for civilian employers. In particular, Veteran Hub together with IREX supports more than 100 Ukrainian employers within the project [Praktika](#) – part of the Veterans Reintegration Program supported by the U.S. Department of State. This project contains recommendations for changing company policies, training for HR staff on ethical interaction with veterans, and personalized advice for employers starting changes in the company. The Free People Employment Center has been advising veterans and employers on effective interaction for many years. Courses for employers were also implemented by Happy Monday and Prometheus. Space of Opportunities NGO implements a number of projects to train specialists who will work with the audience of veterans and their family members at the level of communities and labor collectives. Also, the Space of Opportunities team has developed the program "Preparation of the veteran's workplace", which contains comprehensive recommendations on both the specifics of communication with demobilized employees, and a set of narrow-profile programs in labor collectives that provide for training, career growth, development of tools for barrier-free operation, etc.

What does the status of a Participant in Combat Operations provides for today		
Support type	Area of support services	Legislative definition
Warranty	Additional leave	12) using the next annual leave at a convenient time, as well as receiving additional leave with the retention of wages for a period of 14 calendar days per year;
Priority	Priority to keep the job in case of staff reduction or liquidation of the organization	13) pre-emptive right to remain at work in case of reduction of the number or staff of employees due to changes in the organization of production and labor and to employment in case of liquidation of an enterprise, institution, or organization;

Education

War veterans and their children (under 23) who study full time are eligible for state targeted support for education. State targeted support is provided in the form of full or partial tuition fees, transfer to the state-funded form of education, social scholarships and free accommodation in dormitories, and so on. Guarantees apply to state and municipal institutions for obtaining professional (vocational and technical), pre-higher and higher education. Besides, veterans can take advantage of the right to a preferential long-term training loan (3%)

The main problems in the context of implementing educational benefits are the bureaucratization of the system, lack of funds, uncompetitive educational programs that do not meet the challenges and

needs, ignorance of veterans about the rights and ways to implement them, as well as the number of beneficiaries, which is growing every year.

Identified Problem No. 51

Lack of assessment of the impact of educational programs guaranteed by the state at the expense of budget funds on the process of reintegration of veterans into civilian life. Due to the lack of data on audience demographics and trends, planning for educational services and support often does not meet the needs of the audience.

Suggested Solution

Analyzing and updating the state program for obtaining professional (vocational), pre-higher and higher education, as well as professional adaptation (training, retraining and advanced training) at various educational levels. Creating competitive training programs that take into account the experience and new skills that veterans may have after service.

We Should Consider the Following

The average age of veterans has become significantly less according to our observations. Some of them joined the Armed Forces immediately after school or without completing their studies in other educational institutions. After completing their service, veterans who did not have significant civilian competencies before service may face additional difficulties in moving to the civilian labor market. It is important to develop effective programs for involving veterans in the educational process, in particular, through continuing education, resuming higher education or mastering new specializations.

Identified Problem No. 52

Today, the state guarantees education only in institutions with places provided by government or regional order, which does not include private educational institutions, various educational courses organized by private companies. This position significantly limits the choice of educational area for training or retraining, because today many specialties that are taught by private educational institutions or companies are of much higher quality, more narrowly specialized, and often they increase the chances of being employed in the relevant company. Also, benefits in the field of education are not exclusive guarantees only for veterans – they are also used by other preferential categories, so the competition for one preferential place in an educational institution or for obtaining a loan is being increased.

Part-time education is almost inaccessible to veterans, since there is almost no state order for part-time education, and veterans are mostly adults who work simultaneously to support themselves and their families.

Veterans are poorly informed about the possibility of obtaining the 2nd higher education in the form of retraining.

Family members of the fallen (deceased) warriors and children of veterans are guaranteed to be transferred to the higher educational facilities to the vacant places under state or regional order. Although everyone can exercise the right to be transferred, the transfer procedure is quite complex and tedious, since it takes several months from the start of training, during which, while waiting for the transfer, students are forced to sign a training contract that obliges them to pay for their studies. Besides, if there are no budget-supported places in this area, the university shall apply to the Ministry of Education for provision of additional places. The incomprehensibility of the procedure and the uncertainty of the period during which and under what conditions the student will be transferred to a state-supported place negatively affects the psychoemotional state.

Suggested Solution

It is also important to introduce a replacement mechanism for paying for educational services. Instead of the mechanism of admission to state-funded places, it is impossible to establish **cost compensation** for training, which will allow to choose educational institutions not only among state-funded ones.

Strengthening awareness of all educational opportunities for veterans, their family members, and the families of fallen (deceased) veterans.

We Should Consider the Following

It is necessary to change the approach for veterans regarding the possibility of obtaining the right to free training or its compensation, as today one person is entitled to free training at only one qualification level. If a person decides to change his or her profession after returning from military service, regardless of the first education, the government should facilitate this process without any restrictions.

What does the status of a Participant in Combat Operations provides for today		
Support type	Area of support services	Legislative definition
Priority	Priority in the admission	22) participants of combat operations on the territory of other states are granted a preemptive right to enter institutions of higher, professional pre-higher education, the right to non-competitive admission to institutions of professional (vocational and technical) education and courses for obtaining relevant professions

Relationships and Recognition

The image of veterans in the modern cultural paradigm.

One of the reasons for the Russo-Ukrainian War is the denial by the post-Soviet Russian political elite of the very right of the existence of the Ukrainian nation and state. In order to avoid doubts about this thesis, the bearers of the "Russian world" tried in every possible way to instill in Ukraine and the whole world their image of a Ukrainian - a Little Russian, under-Russian, the younger brother of a

Russian. For this purpose, in the cultural paradigm in general, in literature, cinema and theater in particular, the Ukrainians were portrayed as passive heroes, capable of compromise, farmers who work hard, and who are bullied by external and internal enemies. Thus, there was a deliberate substitution of the historical role of Ukraine in global processes.

9 years of war radically changed the situation with both the self-identification of Ukrainians and the identification of Ukrainians and Russians by the international community. Today, it is fundamentally important to strengthen this process and integrate as fully as possible into the new cultural paradigm of Ukrainism the image of a warrior and defender, a veteran, who in difficult times for the nation and the state, defends sovereignty, territorial values and democratic choice of society.

The image of a veteran should appear as fully as possible in various cultural products - cinema, books publishing, documentaries, etc.

In this context, the Strategy of respect, commemoration, and glorification is a key tool for forming historical memory. We are talking about a comprehensive program of actions, which will include measures to develop the image of a veteran and the values that they embody, honoring the memory of fallen warriors, commemoration, as well as measures aimed at developing a new Ukrainian cultural paradigm, in which the accomplishments of those who invested their most valuable in Ukraine will find support in any manifestations.

Identified Problem No. 53

Lack of a strategy of respect, commemoration and glorification of veterans, development of a new Ukrainian cultural paradigm, which will reveal both elements of the post-war growth of Ukrainians as a nation, and the contribution of modern veterans to the development of national identity.

Suggested Solution

Developing a long-term Strategy of respect, commemoration and glorification of veterans, development of a new Ukrainian cultural paradigm and appropriate plans for 1-5-10-20 years with clear indicators for the implementation of the strategy. The Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, as the central executive authority that develops and implements the information and cultural policy of the country, together with other relevant executive authorities, ensures the development and implementation of such a Strategy, its comprehensive implementation at the national, regional and local levels.

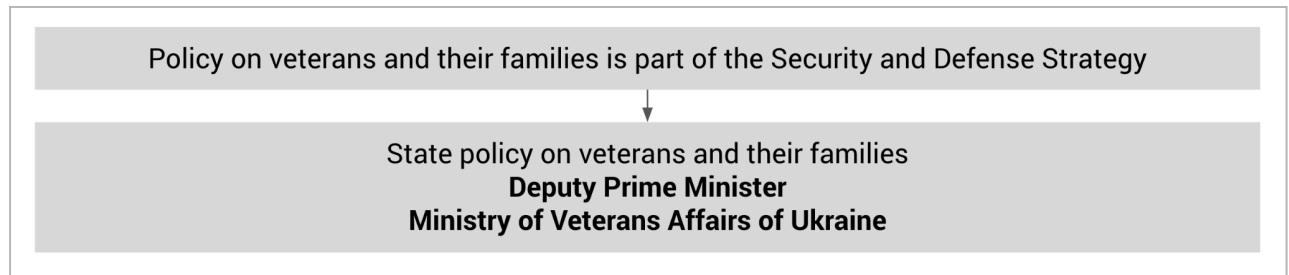
We Should Consider the Following

Integration of the image of a warrior and defender into a new cultural paradigm is necessary at least for the Ukrainian nation and state to continue their development in independence and democracy. The way to do this is to increase awareness of the current and future population of Ukraine about the contribution of veterans to the protection of national values and territorial integrity, as well as to revealing their heroism and sacrifice. Involvement of veterans in the development and implementation of such documents, because only they are the primary source of experience in

protecting the country, and without them, revealing such experience will be perceived as a fabulous attempt by the state to impose on people a certain vision of certain events.

Architecture of the Veterans Affairs System

Policy on veterans and their families is an integral part of the state's defense capability and security. This policy will soon apply to at least 10% -30% of the population of Ukraine.



Veterans are primarily citizens of Ukraine who have fulfilled their duty, and they share most of the needs of the civilian people. They will be users of all systems and services in the state, business and community and will be represented in every stratum of society. Veteran's identity is one of many human identities, and despite the significant impact of combat and military service on veterans' self-identification and needs, vast life experience outside of veterancy will be shared by veterans and civilians.

Therefore, the policy on veterans and their families should be cross-cutting, consistent and understandable.



Hierarchy of Key Decisions

The policy is being developed under unprecedented conditions: without a semantic foundation, in wartime, for the audience that is exposed to this war on a daily basis, with limited resources.

Therefore, the strategy for implementing the state policy on veterans and their families should take into consideration several time stages and suggest a gradation of changes.

1. Stipulate the state policy on veterans and their families as part of the state's defense and security policy.
2. Declare the updated unified state policy, with due account for the needs and processes in the life of veterans and their families, concerns and priorities of the government, and establish a professional Ministry for Veterans Affairs capable of its implementation with the possible expansion of the powers of the Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister.
3. Upgrade the primary legislation. The most important thing is to update the Law of Ukraine "[About the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection](#)".
4. Involve the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine as key stakeholders in the state policy on veterans and their families.
5. Co-direct the development of detailed policies for veterans in each of the government departments.
6. Ensure that veterans and their families are identified end-to-end across all systems, learn their experiences and needs, and develop relevant expert solutions.
7. Bring the regulatory framework into compliance, optimize bylaws in accordance with the approved Strategy and new primary legislation regarding veterans and their families, and families of fallen warriors.

Hierarchy of Key Government Documents

The state policy on veterans and their families is cross-cutting for all government authorities and is focused on the following main objectives:

- Improving defense capability
- Strengthening economic sustainability
- Developing the latest paradigm of the Ukrainian political nation.

In accordance with the developed general framework, each ministry and agency develops its own veteran-related framework within its competence and objectives.

First of all, the policy on veterans and their families is a component of defense policy and defense strategy.

The general framework of state policy on veterans and their families is developed and monitored by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine.

Policies of other central executive authorities regarding veterans and their families:

- Policy of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine:
 - regarding veterans in military service and their family members;
 - regarding veterans in the reserve force and their family members.

- Policy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine:
 - regarding veterans and their families;
 - regarding families of missing persons.
- Policy of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine regarding the physical and mental health of veterans and their families:
 - certain state programs that provide healthcare services for veterans and their families that are not covered by medical guarantees for the entire population of Ukraine.
- The Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine:
 - adaptation of standards for the provision of social services to veterans and their families, including at the regional and community levels;
 - development and expansion of the market of social service providers for veterans;
 - introduction of a case management tool at all stages of social support for defenders (military personnel and veterans).
- Policy of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine:
 - adaptation of educational guarantees for veterans and their families;
 - updating the training system for specialists who will interact with veterans and their families (including short-term retraining programs).
- Policy of the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine:
 - taking into account the specific aspects and needs of veterans in the work of the penitentiary service;
 - considering the feasibility of introducing expert examination capabilities taking into account the combat experience of veterans;
 - upgrade of the policy of providing free legal aid for veterans and their families.
- Policy of the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine:
 - support for the economic sustainability of veterans and their families, support for veteran entrepreneurship;
 - upgrade of the government order system in accordance with the present day needs, taking into account the reintegration of veterans and their families.
- Policy of the Ministry of Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine:
 - policy on IDP veterans;
 - involvement of veterans in the organization of governance in de-occupied territories;
 - involvement in transitional justice processes.
- The Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine:
 - policy on the development of adaptive sports in accordance with the veterans' needs;
 - policy on attracting veterans to national and patriotic education, developing a national identity.
- The Ministry for Restoration of Ukraine:
 - housing policies for veterans and their families;
 - barrier-free access policies in the context of infrastructure restoration and upgrade;
 - development of a Regional Development Strategy tailored to the veterans' needs.

- Policy of the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine:
 - policy of digitization of services to meet the needs of veterans at the country/ regional/community level.
- Policy of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine:
 - upgrading the concept of the contemporary Ukrainian nation centered around the feat of the Ukrainian people in the Russo-Ukrainian War;
 - development of collective memory in the context of glorification of the image of Defenders;
 - development of a policy on creating a safe information environment in the context of glorifying the image of the Defenders;
 - policy on the development of the cultural paradigm of Ukraine, with due account for the values carried by veterans.

Role and Functions of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine

The role of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs is not to provide services to veterans, but to create conditions for the comprehensive readaptation and reintegration of veterans into society and to ensure their safety and dignity, in the family, in the team, in the community and in the country. The Ministry of Veterans Affairs should remain a leader in implementing state policies aimed at protecting the rights and dignity of veterans, as well as promoting their active participation in the building of the modern and secure Ukraine. This is not only a government's duty, but also a moral responsibility of everyone to those who have dedicated their lives to serving the country. In order to ensure the development, implementation and control of a cross-cutting state policy in relation to war veterans, their family members and the families of the fallen warriors, it is advisable to introduce the position of Deputy Prime Minister - Minister for Veterans Affairs of Ukraine.

Functions of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine:

- Development of the architecture and core philosophy of state policy on veterans and their families: the Ministry acts as the main developer and coordinator of policy in all implementation environments, ensures its cross-cutting nature and lobbies for the necessary prioritization of policy on veterans and their families among all government authorities. It defines the basic principles on which support for veterans is based and develops an overall strategy for their integration and support.
- Initiative and coordination of stakeholders: the Ministry interacts with other government authorities (has the appropriate powers), the public sector, communities, international donors and organizations, and businesses to coordinate efforts in the field of policies for veterans and their families. This coordination helps to ensure the effective operation of all structures in this area.
- The Ministry is responsible for verifying compliance of policies for veterans and their families by all executive authorities and at the community level with basic principles and requirements.
- Monitoring compliance with the principles of policies for veterans and their families: the Ministry is assigned with monitoring the implementation of the basic principles of policies for veterans and their families at all levels of government and public organizations. This helps ensure that these policies are consistent and effective.

- Communication of veterans' issues: the Ministry acts as the main communicator of veterans' issues during crisis situations. It provides awareness and coordination to assist veterans and their families during emergency situations.

Objectives of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine:

- Development of a common framework of policy on veterans and their families:
 - it initiates and develops a comprehensive strategy that covers the security component of the state, the restoration of human capital, honoring the memory of the dead and assistance in the formation of national memory, as well as ensuring the identification and implementation of the veterans' needs;
 - creates a common plan of the policy on veterans and their families and develops effective solutions for the readaptation and reintegration of veterans at the community level. This includes training and professional retraining.
- Advising and coordinating government agencies in developing solutions for veterans and their families.
- Summarizing the suggestions and experience of international partners: the Ministry cooperates with international organizations and partners to obtain information and expertise in the field of policies for veterans and their families. It coordinates the process of creating and streamlining legislation in this area.
- Monitoring and controlling compliance with the principles of policies for veterans and their families: the Ministry actively monitors and controls the inclusion of the principles of policies for veterans and their families in the regulatory legal acts of other government authorities, ensuring their compliance with the main objectives.
- Protecting the interests of veterans in crisis situations: the Ministry protects the interests of veterans during emergencies, ensuring their safety and support.

Ukraine, fighting for its independence and territorial integrity, must remember those who defended this independence and continue to defend it – the military and veterans. Their role in national history is extremely important, and their sense of support and respect is invaluable. The involvement of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine, as the leader of state policies regarding veterans and their families, is crucial in this process.

Map of Policy Stakeholders

Veterans return to their people – in the community, in the city, at work, or in the state. It is in everyday communication and interaction that veterans and their families restore the most important connections for their own recovery and life after military service. When developing policies for veterans and their families, it is important to adopt an open system approach and identify all those who seek to support veterans on their way.

To elaborate decisions, it is necessary to develop a detailed map of stakeholders on the part of the government, both at the policy level – by government authorities, and at the level of direct interaction – by service providers.

It is also important to identify non-governmental stakeholders, in particular businesses, public associations and the international donor environment. Each of these stakeholders plays an important and beneficial role in implementing policies for veterans and their families. At the same time, due to the absence of a unified state policy, the efforts of stakeholders continue to be fragmented.

System architecture

State	Public sector	Business	Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a policy • Provide guarantees, base and funding • Define service standards • Upgrade service delivery tools • Develop a framework for regions and communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide services and support in a crisis • Study the experience and communicate the policy • Create additional possibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create environment • Build connections • Support in development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the provision of services • Provide additional support • Provide feedback • Barrier-free principles • Train specialists

Policy Planning Horizon

The policy on veterans and their families will affect the entire life journey of modern Ukrainian veterans. To develop a really systematic approach, it is necessary to lay down a long-term planning horizon that covers the predictive life expectancy of veterans.

Identified Problem No. 54

The discourse around the state policy on veterans and their families focuses on the short-term horizon of action and meeting urgent needs, with a top priority given to the largest demographic groups: young-middle age, early stages of return home, male audience, etc.

Suggested Solution

Developing a strategy based on the policy on veterans and their families with the same projected life expectancy of a generation of modern veterans, covering short-, medium-and long-term periods, as well as action plans.

Developing a holistic portrait of the audience and identifying demographic factors that impact the veterans' experience. Taking into account these factors when planning programs and policies.

We Should Consider the Following

State policy on veterans and their families should take into account and equally prioritize support at all stages of life for veterans and their families, including end-of-life support.

But we should note that the policy is being developed under unprecedented conditions: without a semantic foundation, in wartime, for the audience that is exposed to this war on a daily basis, and with limited resources. Therefore, the strategy for implementing the state policy on veterans and their families should take into consideration several time stages and suggest a gradation of changes.

Below, we suggest the first version of the implementation plan of the policy on veterans and their families, which requires more detailed further development.

Tactical level, priority steps:

- According to this framework document - approval of the modern Strategy of State policy on Veterans and Their Families.
- Upgrading primary legislation in accordance with the Strategy (new Law on the status of veterans and their families).
- Introduction of the position of Deputy Prime Minister - Minister of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine, responsible for the development and implementation of a cross-cutting state policy on veterans and their families, and families of fallen warriors;

- Implementation of the approved Strategy, development and approval of the Implementation Plan, which will include the development of a comprehensive program of policies for veterans and their families in each relevant central executive authority with the controlling function of the Deputy Prime Minister - Minister for Veterans Affairs;
- In accordance with the approved state Strategy, the development of a comprehensive program of policies for veterans and their families at the regional level and assistance in localization at the community level with the coordinating function of the Deputy Prime Minister - Minister for Veterans Affairs;
- Bringing the regulatory framework in line, streamlining bylaws in accordance with the approved Strategy and new primary legislation regarding veterans and their families, and families of fallen warriors.

Strategic level, long-term objectives:

- Upgrade of the integrated Concept of National Security and Defense, in accordance with the provisions of the modern Framework of State Policies for Veterans and Their Families, redefining the role of veterans, military personnel and the reserve force;
- Transformation of the target audience of policies for veterans and their families into the basis of a new Strategy to Restore Human Capital, encouraging veterans to career growth and self-fulfilment in politics, business, and social life;
- Formation of a new Concept for the development of the modern political nation in accordance with the role of warriors in defending the Independence and territorial integrity of the country.

Advocacy Action Plan

This document is the first and important step towards developing a renewed, decent attitude of Ukraine towards its veterans. Despite all the efforts made, we have worked out only a few issues that need to be addressed in order to develop a comprehensive state policy, its implementation and the first tangible results.

By publishing our solutions, we invite all political stakeholders to discussion and collaboration: veterans and their families, representatives of government agencies, public and charitable organizations, society and businesses.

We assume the responsibility to carry out further advocacy work in accordance with this framework, with which we all agree. In particular, in the nearest future, we will initiate:

1. Professional actualization discussion at various expert levels
 - Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine
 - Parliament
 - Business communities
 - Working groups with representatives of professional public and charitable organizations
2. Consultations at the level of the international donor and expert community
3. Actualization measures for ultimate beneficiaries – veteran and their families
 - Public meeting and discussion of suggested solutions with veterans, their families, veterans' associations, public, charitable and volunteer organizations, communities, initiatives (with a kick-off meeting to be held in Kyiv).
 - Regional consultations and discussions.

If you are interested in the suggested framework, we offer our expertise for:

4. Participation in the development of specialized and primary legislation (expert support at the level of upgrading the legal framework).
5. Expert support of the government at the level of developing a Policy Framework for veterans and their families, and specialized programs at certain levels:
 - Relevant Ministries and Departments
 - Regional level
 - Community level
 - End-service providers' level.

Conclusions

Veterans and their families are people who have taken on the highest responsibility and risk their most precious for Ukraine of today and for Ukraine of tomorrow. Their contribution cannot be repaid. No government services will bring back time to be spent with their families, their health, their own civilian self, and life they loved before the war.

However, there are beneficial actions that state policy is really capable of:

- Recognizing their deeds.
- Expressing gratitude and respect on behalf of the entire Ukrainian people.
- Welcoming veterans and their families in the home they are fighting for.
- Honoring the life journey of the fallen and deceased veterans.
- Ensuring the country's defense capability in terms of future threats.

For a detailed study of support for veterans, it is important to conduct a more in-depth comprehensive analysis of their experience.

1. Determine the audience's demographic profile.
2. Determine the impact of reference experience on each of the elements of the well-being of the target audience, the analysis and the needs that arise (separately: veterans, other status, families, IDPs status, difficult life circumstances, etc.).
3. Develop projected scenarios as for the incidence of the problems.
4. Identify the natural route of meeting the needs of the target audience and stakeholders of each of the processes (at the state and other levels).
5. Conduct an audit of existing services, resources and infrastructure, as well as the regulatory framework and their compliance with the identified needs of the audience.
6. Address identified inconsistencies and develop the necessary methodological, resource and infrastructure base to meet the needs of the audience.
7. Enhance the competence of existing service providers to identify and meet the needs of the audience at the grassroots level (direct contact with the audience).
8. Develop a clear communication route for the target audience in terms of each service.
9. Develop a methodology for evaluating the quality of services provided to track the satisfaction degree from the interaction between the target audience and suppliers.
10. Develop a methodology for assessing the impact of services provided to track the long-term impact of interaction on the comprehensive well-being of the target audience and the compliance of support results with the declared policy goal.
11. Maintain the relevance of services by regularly updating incoming demographic data and analyzing the quality and impact of services.

The solutions we offer are risky.

If the proposals are partially adopted, without a comprehensive and integrated approach, the impact of the suggested changes may have the opposite effect. Moreover, changes in the policy on veterans and their families will affect other audiences that are currently legally united with veterans, as well as those for whom the state can offer prioritization tools, provided they have dual status.

It is necessary to conduct a thorough analysis of risks and develop clear mechanisms for countering and responding to them in the event of their occurrence.

We are also aware of the potential conflict of suggestions with constitutional regulations regarding the means of implementing the state's constitutional duty to ensure social protection of persons who defended the homeland, its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and their families.

The Constitutional Court points out that "Restriction or cancellation of such benefits and other guarantees of social protection is possible only if equivalent or more favorable conditions for social protection are introduced." This is exactly what we suggest. In the Ruling of May 22, 2018,⁴⁶ The Constitutional Court recognized that the provisions of the Constitution oblige Ukraine to create an effective system of social protection for various categories of persons, which would help to coordinate their standard of living with the exercising of the right to an adequate standard of living for them and their families by providing appropriate social security. The current system of veterans affairs is inefficiently providing veterans and their families with support, squandering the state budget or not fulfilling the obligations guaranteed by law. Changing the mechanisms of social protection is permissible if the very essence of the content of the right to social protection does not change."⁴⁷

We believe that inaction and delaying changes pose higher risks.

It is already becoming obvious that the Ukrainian budget will face serious resource constraints to implement the full amount of declared benefits for all veterans. Continuing a declarative approach to supporting veterans, in the worst circumstances, can lead to the delegitimization of state institutions that are unable to provide declared benefits.

Ineffective policies can also lead to discrediting the image of veterans and military personnel, significantly reducing their well-being and reducing the defense capability of Ukraine, as a result of reducing the motivation and ability of the most experienced warriors.

Changes can be intimidating, and a public dialogue about changes in times of war will be difficult. However, we are positive that the time has come for the honest dialogue that veterans and their families certainly deserve. The current volume of government's promises will not be fulfilled. The state runs the risk of confusing and deceiving its warriors. This is unacceptable. Instead, we can

⁴⁶ [Ruling of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine](#) in the case of the constitutional submission of 49 MPs of Ukraine regarding compliance of the Constitution of Ukraine (constitutionality) with Paragraph 12, Section I of the Law of Ukraine "On Amendments and Invalidation of Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine" dd. December 28, 2014 No. 76-VIII, and May 22, 2018 No. 5-p/2018

⁴⁷ [Ruling of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine](#) in the case of constitutional submissions of 49 MPs of Ukraine, 53 MPs of Ukraine and 56 MPs of Ukraine regarding compliance of the Constitution of Ukraine (constitutionality) with Paragraph 4, Section VII of "Final Provisions" of the Law of Ukraine "On the State Budget of Ukraine for 2011" of December 26, 2011 No. 20-pn/2011

introduce a new policy on veterans and their families as part of reconstruction reforms, and set realistic goals of responsibility to the citizens who defended the existence of Ukraine — our veterans.

We think that transparent and consistent communication with all people affected by the changes is an integral part of the entire process of creating new policies. We believe that it is possible to come to a mutual understanding. We take this risk first. On October 31, we will publicly present our vision to those whose trust is above all else for us: veterans and their families.

Audiences we will need to address, too:

1. Groups that do not fall under this legislation but, however, apply for the status of a veteran.
2. Active military personnel and their families, who should be informed that the new legislation does not violate their rights as future veterans, and contrary, it is able to provide more effective support.
3. Active veterans who should be informed about the policy tools for veterans and their families available to them from the beginning of implementation.

The policy on veterans and their families will be affecting these people for a lifetime. Creating this policy is not only the state's duty, but also a great responsibility to everyone who is affected by it. We call for temporal, political and communication space to develop an open system of support for veterans and their families, in which each of them will know that they are important to their people.

Veterans and their families return to their homes, and everyone has to support them on their journey. However, so far only the government has a chance to really coordinate the efforts of Ukraine and its citizens in a high-quality way: in the state, in society, on the streets and at home, in order to adequately take care of the well-being of our warriors. We have to do this.

We, the expert community of public organizations, have developed these suggestions to support the government in creating an updated state policy. They are based on our long-term expertise and in-depth analysis of Ukrainian and international approaches. If this framework is agreed upon, we offer our expertise to develop a related strategic and regulatory framework for policy implementation.

We care about those who protect us.